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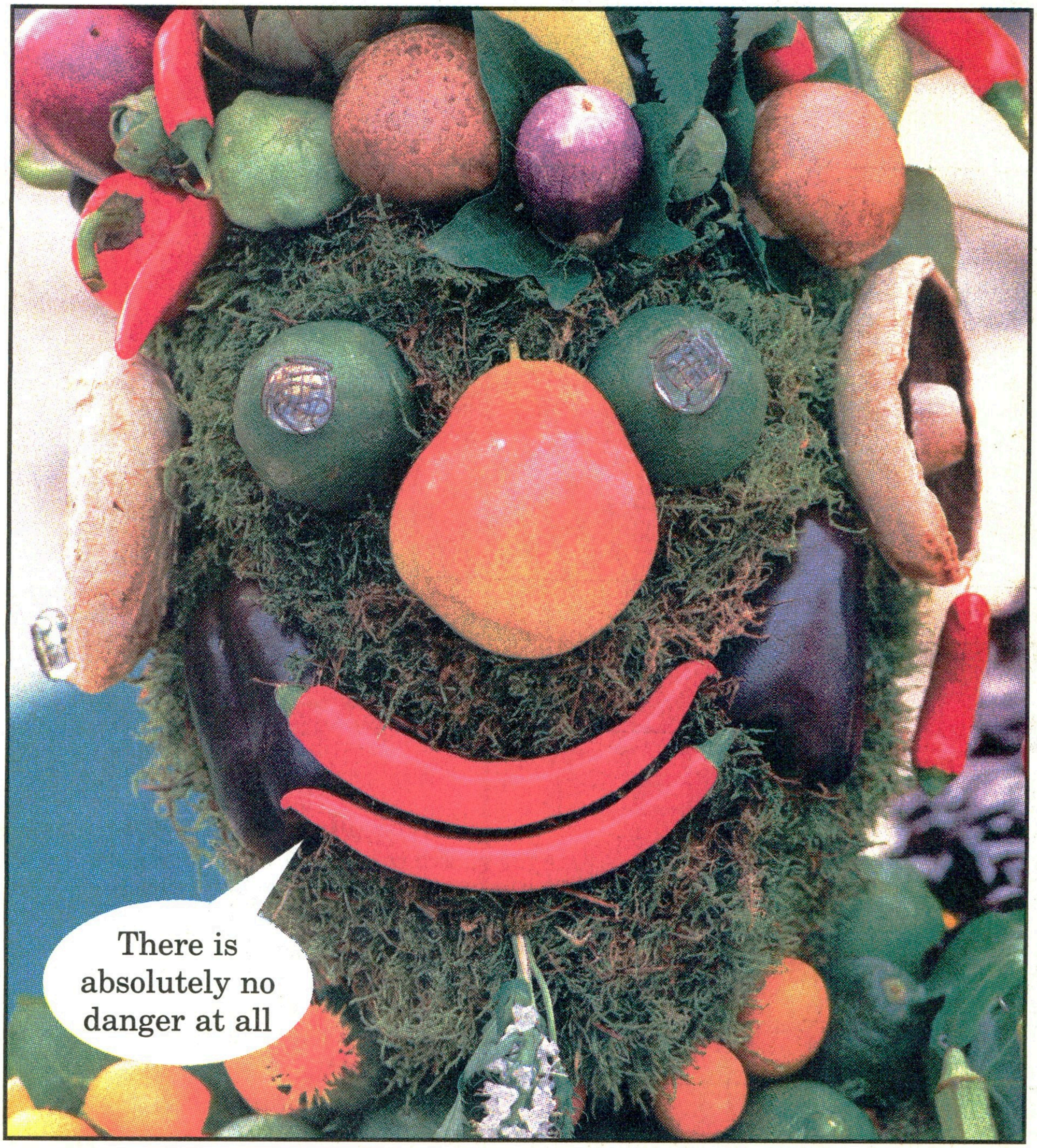

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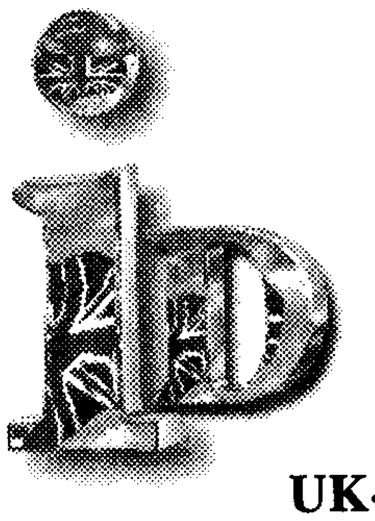

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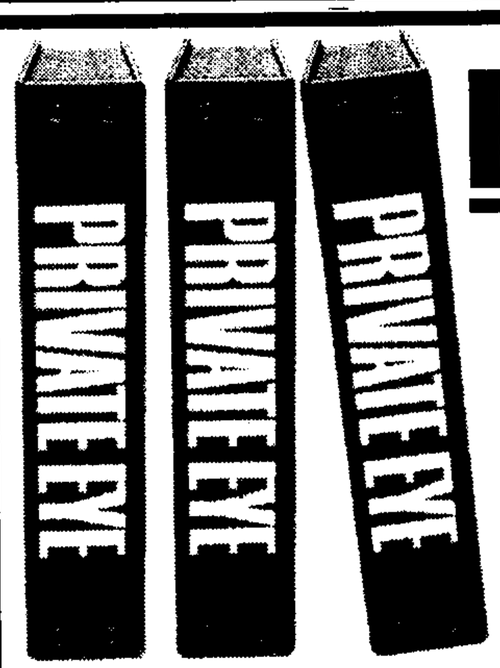

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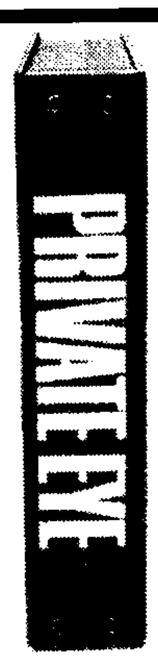

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Gnome

The Problem of Genetically Modified Editorials

(Surely 'Food'? Ed.)

IT is commonplace to say that we are what we eat, but in a sense, this is true. The new so-called "GM Foods" present us with a unique dilemma... widespread concern... Food Safety Agency... tighter regulation...moratorium... further research... cancer in rats.

Yet, the unhelpful talk of "Frankenstein foods" conceals the fact that such experimentation is hardly new. The first genetically modified crop was none other than neolithic wheat... chinese tomatoes... soya beans... Cox's Orange Pippins... food chain... benefits to the Third World... vegetarian cheese... no time for luddites... irresponsible scare-mongering... shop at Sainsbury's *(See full page advertisement p. 37)*

On balance, one would have to conclude that there is no scientific consensus... different views... pressure groups... we're all arts graduates... nothing on the Internet... can anyone on subs desk help out?... haven't a clue... time for Government to do something or other... will this do?

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2000 years later: no room at the inn

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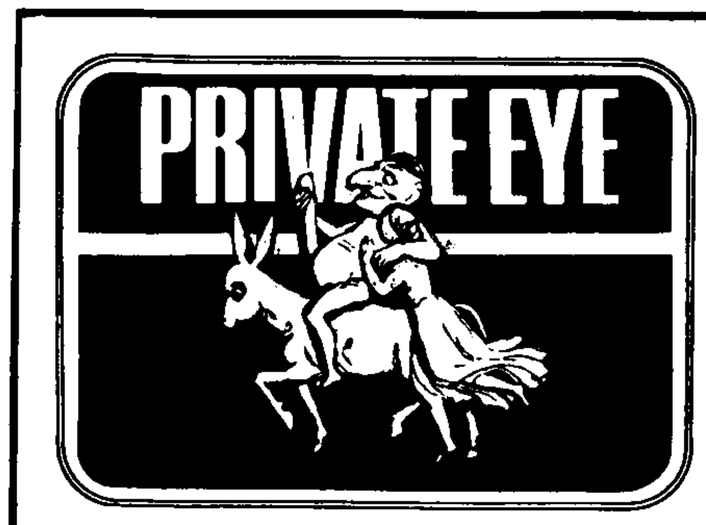

COLOUR SECTION

WHEN Tory leader William Hague recently used prime minister's questions to savage the government's blasé approach to genetically modified foods, the Commons press gallery snorted with derision. Here was another example of Hague fumbling it, or so the wisdom went, because the public didn't give a toss.

At the subsequent 4pm press gallery briefing conducted by the prime minister's press secretary Alastair Campbell, not a single hack questioned the government's quite extraordinary love-in with the biotech industry. Surprising: for this is proving to be an extremely controversial relationship, the fall-out from which threatens to dwarf the Conservatives' BSE crisis.

Hague had got it and the spoon-fed lobby — not surprisingly — had not. Nor apparently had they any inkling of the increasingly bitter wrangling between department of trade ministers (who have earmarked some £15m of taxpayers' money to encourage genetic engineering plants to locate in Britain), and ministers at the department of the environment, transport and the regions, who have been fighting a lonely and losing battle trying to persuade them otherwise.

Ranged against the prime minister, the DTI and cabinet enforcer Jack Cunningham (whose former researcher, by happy coincidence, is employed by Lowe Bell and offers "strategic advice" to GM food manufacturer, Monsanto) are a handful of lonely figures on Labour's backbenches, such as Nottingham South MP Alan Simpson and environment minister Michael Meacher.

While Meacher's call for a moratorium on GM food and for a Warnock-style public inquiry into their effects on health have been met with incredulity in cabinet committee, others such as deputy prime minister John Prescott, Margaret Beckett and Chris Smith are believed to be supporting him. Could Meacher be the first recipient of a GM food hamper courtesy of Bill and Tony? Watch this space.

THE fuss about genetically modified (GM) food could all turn out to be a scare — a good dose of healthy British research into the subject will doubtless get to the bottom of it.

Hard-pressed universities needing funds to look into the safety of GM foods would naturally look to the biotechnology and biological sciences research council (BBSRC) for funds, the main central government funder of research in the area. The fact that the chairman of the BBSRC is Peter Doyle, an executive director from Zeneca, purveyor of genetically modified tomatoes, is of course entirely coincidental.

One of the main research centres funded by the BBSRC is the John Innes Centre in Cambridge, which by weird coincidence houses the Sainsbury laboratory for genetic research, funded by Lord Sainsbury's Gatsby foundation.

John Innes Centre is of course entirely "independent", so the fact that Peter Doyle makes profit out of GM foods will not influence it in any way. Nor will the fact that last September Zeneca and Dupont both announced multi-million dollar investments directly into the centre to fund lab work on wheat genetics and possible "improvements" to wheat genes. The department of trade proudly puffed the deals which "exemplify the ever growing collaboration between the public and the private sectors in UK research".

As testimony to the independence of BBSRC funded research, the John Innes Centre also provided a researcher, Jonathan Jones, who was commissioned by Downing Street to write a sympathetic article to back up their stance on GM foods.

WHY was Robin Cook so enraged by last week's report on the Sandline saga from the foreign affairs select committee? After all, the report exculpated Cook and pinned most of the blame on officials. Shouldn't he have been quietly pleased?

His indignation had rather less to do with Sierra Leone than with the realisation that Gordon Brown had, albeit unwittingly, landed him in the soup again.

Gordon and Robin are old enemies. And in May 1997, soon after Cook's appointment as foreign secretary, the new chief whip Nick Brown — one of Gordon's closest friends — had the task of allocating MPs to the various Commons select committees. By an amazing coincidence, the members he chose for the foreign committee included a high percentage of troublemakers such as Diane Abbott and Andrew Mackinlay. For good measure he also installed veteran Ted Rowlands, who served at the FO in the last Labour government and was thought to feel bitter that he hadn't been given a ministerial job this time.

The moment Cook saw the composition of the committee, he guessed there was trouble ahead. It duly arrived with last year's revelation that the FO had connived at Sandline's embargo-breaking antics in Sierra Leone. Even then he might have escaped, had not Tony Blair instantly hailed the rogue envoy Peter Penfold as a great British hero.

Unable to blame Penfold or his other officials, Cook effectively lost his alibi. Still, after publication of the Legg report it looked as if the case was closed. No more media interest, no more embarrassing questions: trebles and sighs of relief all round.

Then, to his horror, the foreign affairs committee decided to start its own investigation.

Under the Tories Cook was a fervent upholder of the right of select committees to scrutinise the executive: now he is forced to denounce and obstruct them. If a Tory foreign secretary had banned MI6 from helping the committee with its inquiries, Cook would have been the first to splutter about cover-ups: now he himself refuses to let the committee speak to MI6 or see any intelligence reports whatever, and is duly condemned for "obduracy" and excessive secrecy.

At the time of the Scott Inquiry, Cook argued that Whitehall mandarins should be fully investigated and criticised if necessary; now he says that it's outrageous to criticise public officials. In short, he ends up looking like a latter-day William Waldegrave or Geoffrey Howe.

No wonder Cook's friends are muttering that "it's all Nick Brown's fault" — and plotting their revenge.

- ***Spicer, Jordan, Woodhead: More News*** **6**
- ***Campbell soup: Alastair's Journalism Masterclass*** **7**
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NEWS

LT COL Tim Spicer has a nerve. He is suing the foreign office over the Sandline affair, in which he organised a shipment of arms for use in Sierra Leone in clear breach of United Nations resolutions to which the British government had assented.

The colonel is a stickler for law and order, as proved by his near-hysterical intervention in the case of Scots guardsmen Mark Wright and James Fisher.

Fisher and Wright, who had shot an unarmed man, Peter McBride, in the back as he ran away from them, were convicted of murder in 1995. Their defence — that they had acted in self-defence because they thought McBride was going to throw a "coffee-jar" bomb at them — was rejected as a "concoction" by the trial judge.

The men's defence was heard again at the court of appeal and by the House of Lords. In each case, the conviction was upheld. When the men were released after a nation-wide campaign led by the well-known campaigner over injustice Lord Tebbit, they applied successfully to return to their regiment.

In their bid to get back into active service, they were greatly assisted by a 3,500-word affidavit by their commanding officer at the time of the murder, Lt Col Tim Spicer. Spicer ended his statement by asserting: "The legal system designed to protect people in this country has not come up to scratch." Nor, presumably, in his view did UN resolutions and British law over the Sandline affair.

THERE was some surprise at the extent of the universal obeisance paid by British politicians and media to the dead King of Jordan, Hussein.

Many found it a little difficult to understand why a government so committed to ending the hereditary system in the House of Lords should fall so flat on its face before the "plucky little king" who ruled over his country with very little regard for the will of the people.

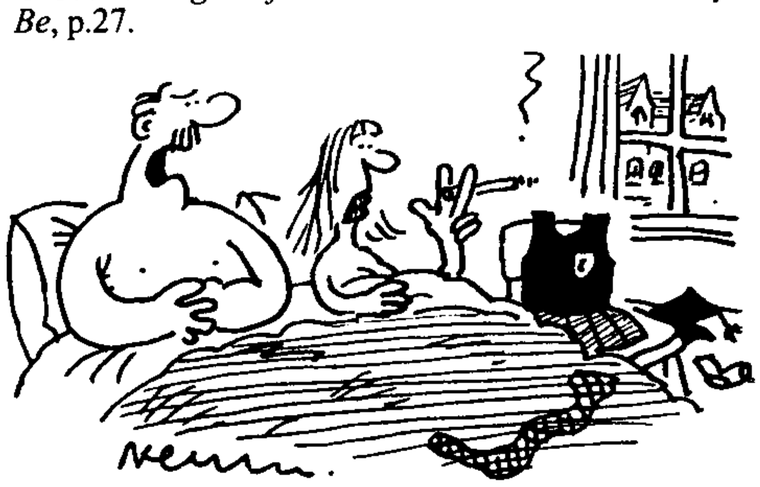
One reason for the adulation may have been the king's preference, when shopping around for arms, for buying British. He bought vast supplies from British arms firms, many of which mysteriously vanished over the border to Iraq. One result was that quite a lot of the arms weren't paid for, and the good old British taxpayer had to fork out for them through the export credits guarantee department (ECGD).

On 2 February shortly before the king died, some very interesting figures were released to the House of Commons showing the "balance of claims paid by ECGD which are outstanding for recovery in respect of sales of defence and other equipment (including non-lethal goods and services) to defence buyers". They read as follows: Indonesia, £11m; Kenya, £16m; Egypt, £46m; Algeria, £98m; Jordan, £253m.

THE strange story of the affair between Chris Woodhead and a former pupil at Bristol revived briefly but then died a quick death as the newspapers reverted to their long-standing hero worship of the chief inspector of schools.

Long investigations into the Bristol affair by both *Mail* newspapers came to nothing. On 9 February the *Evening Standard* devoted two pages to Chris Woodhead's awards for the best schools in London. Among the "particularly successful primaries singled out for praise by the chief inspector" was Kobi Nazrul in Tower Hamlets. There was, sadly, no room to name of the school's headmistress Ruth Miskin... who lives with Chris Woodhead.

● See *Having It Ofsted — Or Not As The Case May Be*, p.27.



"Smoking is against school rules, Miss Perkins"

STREET OF SHAME

"DISHONESTY has spread far beyond the backwaters of daytime television," said the *Sunday Times* gravely in a piece on fake TV chatshows.

It has certainly spread to Edinburgh, where a group of students recently duped the *Evening News* following the death of the Marquess of Bristol. Hacks got very excited that the title was passing to his step brother, a student at Edinburgh University. Failing to find the new marquess, hackette Isabel Oakeshott contacted the university Wine Tasting Society and Ski Club thinking them likely haunts of an aristo.

Neither club president knew the new marquess... but so what? Both were happy to provide completely bogus quotes about the luxury lifestyles they and their chums led on ancient family fortunes. Thus a piece appeared called *Student Princes and the Upper Class of '99*, which began: "They sup on champagne and oysters, hang out at hunt balls and jet to Europe for the weekend" etc.

The con was a big joke for the students, a big embarrassment for the *Evening News* and should have ended there. But such drivel about posh students chartering helicopters was of course irresistible to one desperate, London-based national. It did its own piece asking "Why is Edinburgh so popular with the *jeunesse d'orée?* and quoting freely the *News*'s self-confessed fraudsters. Where were these dishonest, unchecked comments to be found? Why, in the *Sunday Times*'s very own "style" section of course!

●MEANWHILE the *Independent*'s "going out" supplement has carried an equally interesting feature on the history of water polo by Alister Morgan.

"It dates back four centuries to the time when horses were used to play polo on beaches until high tide signalled the end of the match... This version was phased out early in the 18th century as... it was not uncommon for horses to die during a game. This provoked intense criticism from animal lovers."

Morgan's piece is fascinating — and complete cobblers, as Philippe Parker, former captain of the University of Wales water polo team, can attest. He wrote a spoof history of the sport, including the guff about incoming tides and drowning horses, and stuck it on the internet four years ago.

Parker thought there were more than enough clues that it was a spoof — not least the reproduction of a Seurat painting of bathers in the Seine as an example of a 19th century "spot the water polo ball" newspaper contest. It seems TV chatshow researchers aren't alone in disseminating fiction.

***OBSERVER* hacks are bemused by the behaviour of their brash, self-confident young news editor, Andy "Baloney" Malone. Experienced reporters do not know what to make of his responses to their story ideas. "We're not sure if he's got a really strange sense of humour," said one, "or whether he's just ignorant and thick."**

For instance Andy McSmith pitched a story to his news editor only to be told: "That sounds a bit political to me." Puzzled, McSmith reminded Malone: "Well, I am the chief political correspondent."

Home news reporter Martin Bright had a good idea. "I think we should do a big number on the New Deal."

Malone: "What's the New Deal?"

Bright: "Er, it's a central plank of government policy."

Malone: "Sounds boring to me."

Hacks, in fact, are getting tired of answering Malone's endless questions: What's the ICA? Who is Richard Rogers? What is Fairness at Work? In his favour, however, Malone is all for giving female journalists a fair chance. "I think we should hire some more women," he told hackette Lucy Johnston. "The beaver count isn't high enough around here."

Sadly the count in question is now even lower, for Johnston has sensibly taken herself off to work at the *Depress*.

ROSIE BOYCOTT's decision to elevate Michael Pilgrim to run the *Express on Sunday* proves that dope-smoking doesn't always make you well disposed to your fellow humans.

Pilgrim, one of the most charmless characters ever to edit a national newspaper, is notorious as a cost-cutting barbarian.

While at the *Guardian* and *Observer* he would enliven managerial meetings by applying for the jobs of executives whom he didn't like. At the Mirror Group, David Montgomery recognised a kindred spirit and put Pilgrim in charge of the *Indy*'s finances. Pilgrim promptly suggested to arts editor Mark Pappenheim that he needn't spend money on critics because there were "plenty of young people in the office who would go to the theatre for nothing".

At his first meeting with *Sindie* arts editor Roseanna de Lisle he demanded that she cut her budget by 25 percent. As she started to explain why this might be difficult, he interrupted her with the cogent argument "fuck off". A shocked de Lisle said she was not accustomed to being spoken to like that. Pilgrim paused to consider this for a moment — then repeated "fuck off" and walked away.

ONE of the few abiding strengths of the *Independent* has long been its pictures — particularly those of Brian Harris, who has been with the paper since its birth in October 1986. No longer.

A bewildered Harris was last week summoned to see editor Simon Kelner, kept waiting while senior management finished their lunch and then sacked.

Harris's crime was having the audacity to tell Kelner and his new nodding dog, picture editor Andy Blackmore, that he felt the *Indie* wasn't using enough imaginative photos. He has now learned the consequences of speaking his mind.

WHY is Tony Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell a fan of Steve Pope, columnist on the ethnic paper *New Nation*?

Campbell, when he slammed the national media for being trivial, publicly lauded a piece by Pope that praised Blair as "genuinely sincere" and "a guy who actually believes in what he's doing". Pope's piece also condemned the national press as "middle class, public school, ego-tripping, arrogant, smug, patronising, cynical, nasty, self-important merchant bankers" — so perhaps it's no wonder Campbell's a fan.

Oddly, though, he forgot to point out that Pope is currently under investigation by the Press Complaints Commission following an article he wrote last September under the headline "Do You Know Where They Live?" In it he asked for the addresses of the alleged murderers of Stephen Lawrence so he could pass them on to readers who could visit their homes and "offer our suggestions as to how their media image or indeed their facial features may be enhanced".

MUSING on the case of Tom Spencer MEP, *Independent* columnist Deborah Orr argues against sacking people just because they use drugs and declares that we should be "absolutely honest if we are to bring up our children to understand the true dangers of drugs".

Oddly, Orr forgets to mention that she is married to, and has a child by, the novelist Will Self — who was famously sacked by the *Observer* for lying about having taken heroin on board John Major's plane during the 1997 election campaign.

THERE may now be a short interlude in the career of media medic Dr Vernon Coleman (see *Eyes passim*): he has been sacked from his column in the Sunday *People*.

When former *Sun* hack Neil "Wolfman" Wallis moved into the editor's chair at Canary Wharf last year and went through the accounts, he was dumbfounded to learn that the Doc was collecting no less than £150,000 a year for his problem page. A table was booked at the Ritz Hotel for a working-over luncheon, at which Wallis suggested that the columnist might consider a modest nip and tuck in pay of around 50 percent. Coleman's chortles could be heard from the kitchen as he pointed out that he was protected by a rolling 12-month contract negotiated with the deposed Bridget Rowe.

And so, although he was secretly fired 10 months ago, Coleman continues to rake in the *People*'s pay-cheques until his last word appears in a couple of months.

The former GP is already a millionaire thanks to his publishing empire and premium-rate phonelines. His big break came when he was poached from the obscurity of the *Star* to become "The *Sun* Doc", offering much-needed sexual advice to that paper's one-handed readers. And who was the *Sun* executive who recruited Coleman, thus setting him off on the road to fame and fortune? Step forward Neil "Wolfman" Wallis.

HACKWATCH

Alastair Campbell's Journalism Masterclass

HACKS must abandon their obsession with "the political fallout, the froth, the gossip, the soap operas, the instant judgments", Tony Blair's spokesman Alastair Campbell said in a lecture to the Fabian Society last week.

This, he added, was not a party political point. The government, the opposition and other public institutions all deserved fair and considered coverage. The alternative -- constant harping on gossip, rows and personality clashes -- would lead to "the erosion of confidence in politics". As he warned, "the way the press covers politics matters because its whole thrust can create cynicism about politics, about people who work in public life."

Campbell used to be a journalist himself, of course: in 1993 and 1994, before taking the Blair shilling, he was the main political columnist on Rupert Murdoch's *Today* newspaper. His own articles show how it *should* be done — and how to avoid the sins that so irritate him. Such as:

GRATUITOUS MISCHIEF

In April 1993 a *Today* reader accused Alastair Campbell of writing "drivel": if he thought he could run the country better than politicians, why not become an MP instead of just being a "stirrer"? Campbell was unimpressed: "I have never said I could run the country better than politicians," wrote the man who now tries to do just that. "In any case, what's wrong with stirring?"

LESE MAJESTE

It was Alastair Campbell who advised Tony Blair to canonise Princess Diana as "the people's princess", and strenuously defended the royal family from media attacks in the weeks after her death... They are, after all, "people who work in public life" and must therefore be cherished.

His respect for the Windsors was equally apparent in his *Today* column. Here he is on 8 March 1993: "To her [Diana], life means smart restaurants, TV soaps, computer games for the kids and the chance to spend the Nepalese national debt on frocks." A month later, after the IRA bombing of Warrington, he wrote about her thwarted attempt to visit the memorial service: "She is the reasonably pretty, not very bright, very manipulative separated wife of our adulterous future King... I can just about stomach her inability to pass a hospice without a photocall. But this latest attempt to muscle in suggests a PR initiative out of control. I don't imagine Warrington was thrilled to have Phil the Taxi Driver when they should have had the Queen. But at least he didn't turn it into a fashion shoot." (8 April 1993.)

On other occasions he described her as "Princess of Aerobia", "Princess Clotheshorse", "pampered, overpaid and attention-seeking", "vacuous, shallow, silly and egomaniacal". When Diana's brother criticised the press for harassing her, Campbell dismissed Earl Spencer as a "self-indulgent twit" and "hypocritical upper class little pillock" who deserved a "smack in the mouth".

What of the heir to the throne? "Nobody can say I haven't tried to help Charles," he wrote on 24 May 1993. "While all around me are in love with Diana, I've tried to put the other side — that he's a decent bloke who can't compete with her scheming ways." Quite so. In the very same column he called the Prince "an overprivileged twit", and a year later (9 May 1994) delivered an even more fulsome tribute -- describing him as "someone who cannot hold his marriage together, does not see his own kids from day to day, delegates their upbringing to nannies and private school spankers, went to a Spanking Academy himself, needed the power of patronage to get into university, apparently wants to send his own sons to Eton, *the* Spanking Academy, whose advisers all come from similar establishments and are similarly ill-suited to speak about the real world, and who courts his mistress with lavatorial suggestions."

The rest of the family fared no better. "There are many reasons for the decline in royal esteem," Campbell suggested on 10 May 1993. "One is that so many of the royals are thick." Take Prince Philip, an "insensitive and stupid" chap who "produced four children, provided them with the most privileged schooling that money could buy, yet the lot of them turned out to be intellectual dunderheads". On 24 February 1994 he returned to the attack: "I have never gone for the notion that the Royal Family represents all that is right in this country. They represent to me much that is wrong in this country, notably its class system, obsession with titles, dressing up and patronage and the arrogance of unelected power."

Still, there was one encouraging sign. "How heartwarming that Prince Andrew has found himself a new lady friend," he commented on 29 March 1993, after salivating over photos of Catrina Skepper. "And with nice legs too, such a contrast to Fergie's."

PERSONAL ATTACKS

As Campbell said last week, vicious abuse of MPs — from whatever party -- can only undermine general trust in politicians. And he should know.

Chris Patten, who has been chosen by Tony Blair for an important job in Northern Ireland, was attacked by Campbell in *Today* as a "smug sod" who has "turned lying into an art form". Margaret Thatcher, now another of Blair's gurus, was regularly described as "Lady Backstabber" and "Baroness Barking". On 19 April 1993 he advised her to "crawl into a hole and stay there".

John Major, whom Blair praised so highly after the Good Friday agreement, was let off more lightly: "shallow, cynical, incapable of telling the truth, all things to all men, a charlatan, a cheat" (17 January 1994); "the piece of lettuce who passes for a Prime Minister" (9 May 1994); "simply a second-rate, shallow, lying little toad of a man" (30 May 1994).

SPIN

In his lecture last week, Campbell complained that cynical journalists are forever distinguishing between what politicians say and what they mean. " 'Spin' never was as important as people imagine," he insisted.

Never, eh? On the day of the Newbury by-election (6 May 1993), he told *Today* readers not to believe anything said by politicians about the result, but to "translate what the politicians say into what they mean". He identified several disingenuous dialects — such as "Fowlish", named after the Tory party chairman Sir Norman Fowler, and "Paddy-Pooh", the speciality of the dishonest Lib Dems. "You may also encounter a third dialect, Mandeldrone, coming from Peter Mandelson, who has masterminded Labour's successful defeat." Whoops!

CYNICISM

Blair and Campbell are determined to avoid the old confrontational style of politics. The Liberal Democrats, for example, are valued colleagues who have a useful contribution to make. Sure enough, in his very first column for *Today* (4 March 1993), Campbell urged Labour supporters to vote Lib Dem in the Newbury by-election: "Don't vote Labour — you know it makes sense." But on 22 March, after repeating the recommendation, he denounced the Lib Dems as "the dirtiest and most dubious by-election fighters in politics". How to reconcile these two arguments? Easy: as Campbell explained cynically on 14 June 1993: "Politics always was a dirty business."

BOREDOM

One of Campbell's gripes is that the media indulge the vanity of colourful political mavericks like Ken Livingstone, while loyal and diligent conformists are mocked as clones or Blair Babes. Here's an example of what he must have in mind, from the Alastair Campbell column in *Today* on 29 April 1993: "Brian Clough's demise is more than a personal tragedy and a blow to good football. It is a further boost to Britain's status as a nation of trainspotters. It is another reminder that in public life characters are thin on the ground and conformity is rampant... The Cabinet is full of Graham Taylors — smooth-talking, identikit ministers. Parliament is packed with them, which is why non-trainspotting MPs such as Nicholas Winterton and Frank Field don't prosper."

Indeed they don't: one of Campbell's tasks last summer was to explain to hacks why Frank Field's non-conformity made it necessary to sack him and fill the government with, er, trainspotters such as Alistair Darling, Alan Milburn and Stephen Byers.

PERSONALITY CLASHES

Nothing infuriates Alastair Campbell more than the suggestion that Labour's frontbench is riven with feuds between Blairites, Brownites, Cookites, Prescottites etc, who are forever scheming against their colleagues and planting stories with friendly hacks. Why must the press always look for rivalry and skulduggery where none exists?

Perhaps because it is following the example of Alastair Campbell. On 1 July 1993, after a rash of stories elsewhere rubbishing the women in Labour's shadow cabinet, Campbell noted sneeringly that Mo Mowlam was always exempted from these attacks, probably because she had "more media friends than the others". On 11 April 1994 he again went for la Mowlam, grumbling about her ceaseless headline-grabbing initiatives. "It all smacks of a bid to get noticed and talked about before national executive and shadow cabinet skirmishing."

The same low motive was attributed to another frontbencher in Campbell's column of 30 August 1993: "Labour's health team has been less effective under David Blunkett than it was under Robin Cook. Blunkett appears to view shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown as a bigger enemy than [Virginia] Bottomley. Attacks on colleagues have been a traditional route to a good vote in internal party elections."

A month later, reporting from the party conference at Brighton, he wrote of the "widespread unease" about Jack Cunningham's performance as shadow foreign secretary. "It really is very hard to get anyone to say a kind word about him. He has been so low-profile that some are suggesting he has given up on Westminster... Where leadership has been sought, all too often there has been silence. Politicking may not be enough to save him." Can this Cunningham by any chance be related to the man who now works alongside Campbell as the "Cabinet enforcer"?

On 16 May 1994, after John Smith's death, Campbell noted that the friendship between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown "will be tested to the full in the coming days, and it will not entirely be their fault if it fails to stand up to the test... With little to separate Brown and Blair on policy or ideology, don't let anyone say politics is not about personality or style." Anyone other than the chief spokesman for Tony Blair, presumably, who now grumbles incessantly about hacks' interest in such irrelevancies.

A week later, on 23 May 1994, Campbell reported that Robin Cook "has more support than the polls suggest but if he decides he can't win, his prime motivation will be a desire to stop Brown, for whom he has no time. So he may swing behind Blair, run his campaign even, then Bambi will be romping all the way home." *Bambi?* Tut tut. Campbell then took a swipe at Brown himself. "The Brown camp seeks to portray Blair as anti-union, and therefore Brown as pro-union. This repositioning is not only disingenuous, but ultimately doomed to fail."

On 6 June 1994, with the Labour leadership contest in full swing, Campbell revealed that "both Prescott and Cook are in part motivated by dislike and mistrust of Brown". Indeed, one should always "bear in mind that the very mention of his [Brown's] name sets Prescott's teeth on edge".

Right ho, Alastair, we will.

"I'm in computers..."

WITH Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell intent on dishing the broadsheet press and the BBC for their obsession with "trivia and gossip", other ministers have immediately fallen into line, offering high brow magazines such as *Women's Realm* insights into their plans for their living rooms.

Yet, having decided to rerelease some of their plans for welfare reform for at least the third time, social security minister Alistair Darling hit upon a new wheeze to piss off the BBC. Startled BBC producers were informed that Alistair would come on air to discuss his "new" plans for being tough on the poor on condition that a) no one else was allowed on at the same time, and b) that no opposition spokesman be allowed to comment on his words of wisdom directly after any interview had been graciously granted.

GOOD news for heart patients and those who have made donations to the Heart Research Fund, the Leeds-based charity which makes grants for cardiac research in Yorkshire.

Leeds North East MP Fabian Hamilton has come aboard as a trustee. And his duties for the fund, according to the *Yorkshire Post*, include "making sure it abides by charity and company law".

The MP — selected in 1997 as an on-message Blairite alternative to left-winger Liz Davies — of course knows a lot about abiding by company law. In April 1998 (see *Eyes* 946 and 949) he appeared before Morley magistrates after a number of his own companies went bust. He and his former computer firm Serif Systems pleaded guilty and were fined for four breaches of... the companies act.

OFFICIALS at the Northern Ireland office were surprised to learn that Mo Mowlam's special adviser Nigel Warner had been invited to a thrash organised by the Middle East Association at the London Hilton in Park Lane on 10 February.

Warner, not known for his interest in the defence industry, had been invited to the beano along with senior businessmen Tony Chitty of GKN, Martin Jay of Vosper Thorneycroft and Victor Orlov of Kvaerner Boving. But imagine their surprise when they also learned that Jon Norton, husband of Mo Mowlam and a senior member of staff at ANZ Bank had also been asked to don his glad rags for the thrash. No doubt they had been invited along to discuss the "decommissioning of weapons".

LAST YEAR, in the name of open government, then Welsh secretary Ron Davies set up an "open forum" on the internet where issues concerning the Welsh assembly could be discussed.

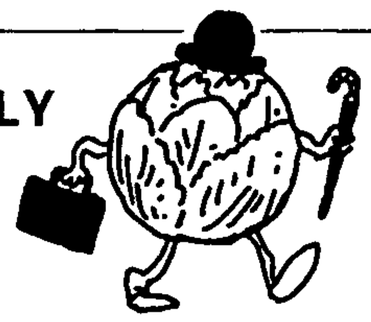
The idea behind the "virtual chatroom" was that any legitimate questions about devolution or plans for the administration of the new body would be swiftly answered by civil servants at the Welsh office.

On 30 December one John Evans set down a list of questions about the cost of the Peirhead building, which was rented and then rejected as an office for the national executive (*Eyes passim*). He wanted to know how much was being paid in rent, details of the lease, costs of conversion and repairs. This was a follow-up to his earlier question which asked if Crickhowell House, the original site proposed for the assembly before being rejected in favour of yet another Richard Rogers fishtank, could instead be used to provide housing for needy members of the community in the deprived area of Cardiff Bay, where it stands.

On 8 January he posted the question again. "I wondered what progress was being made in supplying an answer." He asked the same thing again on the 15th and again on the 22nd. In the meantime, as the local press quoted millions-pound figures of money being wasted on the scheme, several other correspondents joined Evans in demanding answers, speculating as to whether a major scandal might be brewing in Cardiff Bay.

Last week they finally received an answer... of

GENETICALLY MODIFIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS



LABOUR's love affair with the Frankenstein food industry knows no bounds, it seems. The UK is currently the *only* country in the European Union (EU) openly supporting a new directive which would "harmonise" patent laws in Europe and enable already rich biotech companies to lay claim to the indigenous plants growing across great swathes of the earth's crust.

If this new directive on biotechnology patenting is adopted and put into effect by member states, the present controversy over genetically modified (GM) food may reach crisis point by the millennium.

Eurocrats have long perceived biotechnology as a lucrative plum to be plucked by their newly engineered friends in the biotechnology industry. For 10 years the European commission has been trying to pass a directive with the seemingly benign title "Proposal for a Council Directive on the Legal Protection of Biotechnological Inventions". Environmental and other activists describe it as "an outrageous and shameful piece of legislation".

Even without the directive, however, European Patent Office (EPO) patents have already been taken out on human blood cells and the human growth hormone gene, and applied for on the breast cancer gene BRCA1, says Ruth McNally, a former adviser to the European parliament's committee on energy, research and technology.

She claims that in adopting the new directive, EU institutions would be giving into the demands of industry in the mistaken belief that without patent protection there will be no innovation in biotechnology. In fact it will lead to monopolistic control and private ownership of plants and their medicinal properties worldwide. Even now it is estimated that farmers in developing countries give away $5.4bn in lost royalties from food and drug companies which use their seeds and medicinal plants.

After seven years of delaying tactics by MEPs and campaigners, MEPs used new powers under the Maastricht treaty to reject the commission's first attempted directive in 1995. Not to be outdone by this new-fangled democracy, commissioner Mario Monti introduced a virtually identical directive just months later. Furious MEPs reacted by introducing 66 amendments during its first reading in parliament in July 1997, when the Greens created a riot by donning pirate hats to show up the shameful "biopiracy".

The amendments were largely rejected by the commission and the council who returned the offensive directive to the parliament for a second reading in May 1998. To the astonishment of other EU members and even some Labour MEPs, UK Socialist MEP Pauline Green ordered the entire Socialist group in parliament to vote *against* the amendments as well.

Peter Custers, a Dutch campaigner, commented: "It is very strange that one individual state (UK) is supporting the commission and the council in defending the directive. The Dutch government, recently joined by the Italian, has now taken the matter to the European court of justice claiming that the directive was wrongly drafted by the commission under the Maastricht treaty and infringes human rights."

Not that this deters the new Labour government. Coincidentally the party received substantial funds for its electoral campaigns from Novartis and recently tried to push through plans to give the pharmaceutical industry and the UK government control over natural food supplements by classifying them as "medicines" — which would fit neatly with their desire for control over world food supplies.

● The EPO has granted patents to the UK Foundation of Ethnobiology, the US Department of Health and Human Services, the US Army, the US National Institute of Health, New York University and, yes, new Labour's chums at Monsanto pharmaceuticals, to gather raw materials from remote areas of the Amazonian jungle, China, South East Asia and India. Effectively this will prevent local communities developing these plants themselves.

According to Ruth McNally, a research fellow at Brunel University, Monsanto already has European patents on genetically engineered corn, wheat, rice, cotton, sugarbeet, oilseed rape, carola, flax, sunflower, potato, tobacoo, alfalfa, poplar, pine, apple, grape, rapeseed, broccoli, cauliflower and all genetically engineered soybeans.

Beat the Millennium Bug with a free Goverment funded Bug Buster Course.

Dept for Education & Employment

sorts. It was announced that the Welsh assembly open forum was being closed down permanently, owing to the posting of "obscene and libellous comments".

NIGHTCLUB owner, pre-election chauffeur to Peter Mandelson and "new" Labour cultural guru James Palumbo faced embarrassing questions in the high court recently in a legal battle with his former girlfriend and employee Lynn Cosgrave.

Palumbo accuses Cosgrave of receiving fees while she worked for him that more properly belonged to his Ministry of Sound company in London. During the case Cosgrave has claimed that Palumbo offered her a 30 percent share in one of his companies if she would wear a body wire and infiltrate rival clubs to seek out evidence of drug dealing by the management. He denies this. Judgment is awaited.

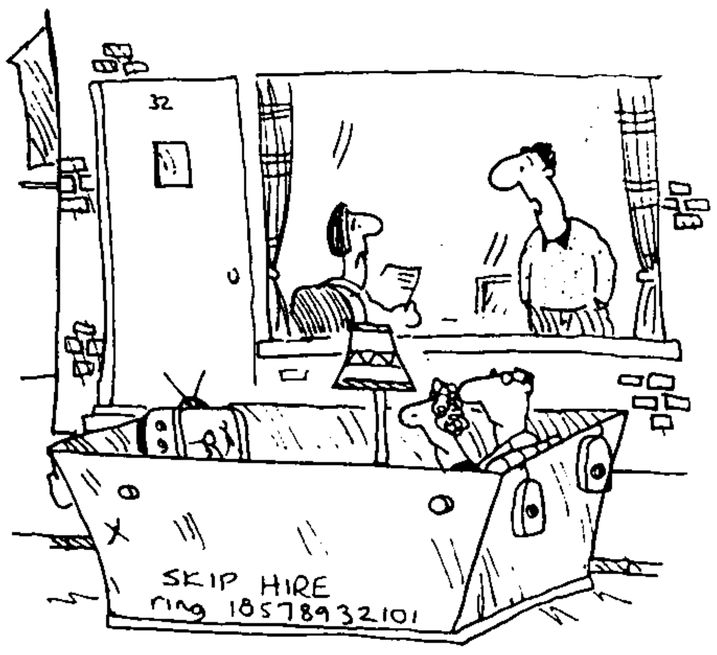
Cosgrave told the court that she worked with journalists from the *Sunday Times* Insight team to attempt to prove that the management of London clubs such as Club UK and Universe, and Liverpool's Cream, were involved in selling drugs on the premises. Evidence of such activity would put clubs out of business.

Palumbo claims his Ministry knew nothing of such journalistic "stings", and will no doubt ensure that no story about such activity appears in the club's eponymous magazine, edited by his cousin James Bethell, who used to work for... the *Sunday Times* Insight team.

Rumours have been circulating for several years about Palumbo's unhealthy interest in the problems of his rivals. There was much speculation as to who was employing a barrister to sit in on last year's trial of Cream doorstaff on drugs charges — a trial which found no evidence of management involvement — and who refused to disclose his interest when asked to by the judge. Rumours have also been rife about the use of private investigators by major clubs to infiltrate rivals and collect evidence of drug activity.

Palumbo naturally denies any involvement in such dubious business practices. His friendship with "new" Labour chum Lord Hollick seems to have put paid to a proposed story in the *Express* comparing the case to the BA/Virgin "Dirty Tricks" campaign. In private, however, Palumbo is considerably more worried about confidential files which have disappeared from his office and apparently contain details of exactly what it is he does for the government.

"I'm leaving you, Gerald — don't try and stop me!"



"My God — there's a couple moved into our skip!"

LABOUR's national executive has appointed a new party press supremo — Phil Murphy, formerly of the Arts Council. Friendly Phil is expected to bring a lighter, pastel-shaded approach to spin in contrast to the old brutalism of David Hill and the late, unlamented Charlie Whelan.

During the selection process, it seems, Murphy was level-pegging with the BBC's John Kampfner when it emerged that hacks had been briefed that Kampfner had already been confirmed in the role. Party officials, taking these rumours as evidence that Kampfner was trying to spin himself into the job, decided it was all too much like the bad old days and dropped him.

IN AN angry Commons speech in January 1997, Gerry Steinberg, Labour MP for the City of Durham, launched a vitriolic attack on the Tories' plans to build a new Dryburn hospital under "their so-called private finance initiative, which is a complete and utter failure." The PFI, he went on, "is nothing but a con-trick... a farce".

Three months later Mr Steinberg was returned with an increased majority and his party at last in government. However, the Tory plans for PFI at Dryburn proceeded apace. This month, a detailed audit of the "full business case" for PFI at the hospital has been published by the hospital workers' trade union trade union Unison.

The report compares the dynamic new Labour PFI plans for Dryburn with what would have happened if the hospital had been built under boring, fuddy duddy old Labour. It highlights the significant features of the new proposals as follows:

1 MORE EXPENSIVE. Comparing like with like in the business case, the audit reckons that the PFI hospital will cost £158.87m compared to the "public sector option" cost of £136.92.

2 MORE INTEREST AND DIVIDENDS. The biggest annual cost for the hospital will be the £7.3m of NHS money paid to the private construction consortium which builds the hospital to meet its interest and dividend charges. That's 12 percent of the trust's projected income, compared to a maximum of 7.5 percent of income spent on capital charges under the old system.

3 FEWER NURSES. Where will this extra money come from? From the clinical staff, mainly nurses. Spending on staff will be down from £36m in 1994 to £28m in 2000.

4 FEWER BEDS. The original plan was for a 910-bed hospital with 13 operating theatres. This was reduced to 565 in the outline business case in 1994 — and is now down to 454 beds.

5 NO NHS HOSPITAL IN THE END. After 30 years making a profit, the private consortium, led of course by Balfour Beatty, will inherit the hospital from the NHS.

As Gerry Steinberg might have put it: the whole PFI plan is a con trick, a complete and utter farce. But here's a funny thing. Mr Steinberg has made no more speeches in the Commons protesting about PFI at the hospital.

GRANADA chief executive Charles Allen tells the *Guardian* that his favourite politician was Nye Bevan. Mr Allen has every reason to be grateful to the Labour government, which has swamped his firm with generous contracts (see *Eye* 914). But would Nye Bevan have approved Granada's treatment of its low-paid workers?

In May last year, as the *Eye* reported at the time, Granada bought out multi-million contract cleaner Pall Mall, which cleans the premises of 380 companies. An irritating encumbrance in the package was an industrial dispute involving 54 mainly Asian women cleaners at Hillingdon Hospital. They went out on official strike against a huge pay cut in 1995, and have been out ever since. Just before Christmas, the women won their case for unfair dismissal. Most Nye-worshippers cheered, but Charles Allen didn't. He and his company are refusing to obey the tribunal's order to reinstate the women.

Even if they do get their jobs back, the Hillingdon women cannot expect to earn quite as much as Granada director Stephanie Monks, who topped up her £230,000 salary last month with £205,000 from buying and selling share options. Indeed, they would be lucky to earn more than £3.60 an hour, the rather low figure for the legal minimum wage set by the low pay commission. If you think hard, you can guess the name of an energetic "new" Labour supporter on the commission who supported the low figure: Stephanie Monks.

'Backbiter'

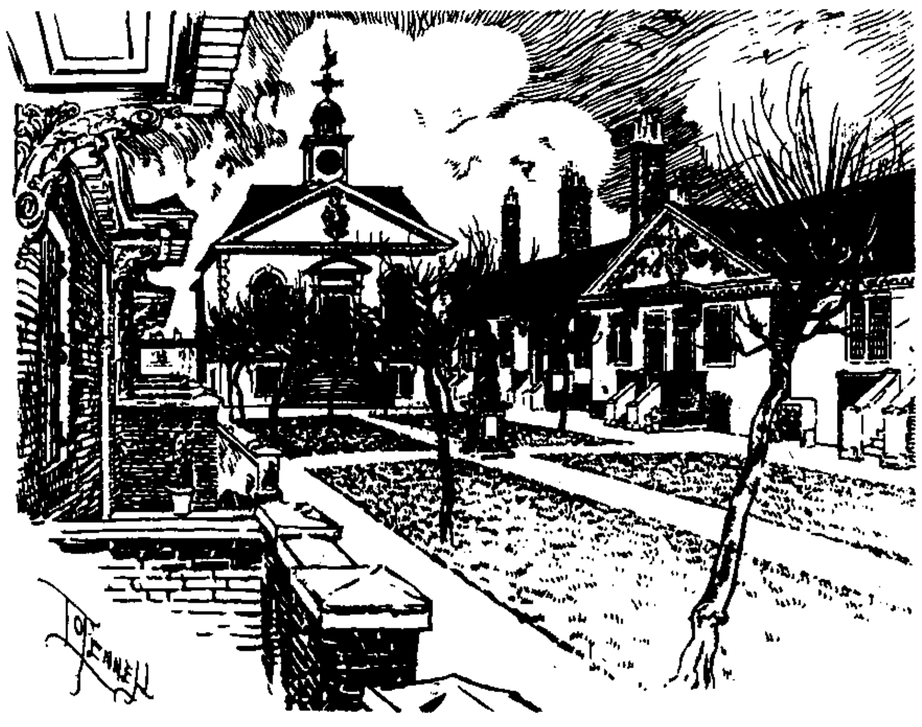
NOOKS and CORNERS

MANY, far too many, of the outrages discussed in this column concern churches: their ruination in the cause of liturgical reform (if RC) or accommodating the Rite of Coffee or whatever (if Anglican).

Fine buildings — listed buildings — can still be spoiled and mutilated because of the mischievous statutory anomaly of the "ecclesiastical exemption" which allows the various churches to ignore the usual listed building controls when it comes to interiors.

Instead, in response to widespread criticism by those who care about historic buildings, some of the churches set up their own internal systems of consultation and control over alterations to ecclesiastical structures which are intended to take the views of amenity societies and other interested parties.

The Church of England has diocesan advisory committees and a system of appeal through the ecclesiastical courts, which seem to work reasonably well, while the Roman Catholics have historic church committees. And these often do not work at all. Yet the minister for the arts Alan Howarth is almost certain to renew the ecclesiastical exemption despite plenty of evidence that the system does not always work as intended — particularly in the Roman Catholic church.



There is the case of the Church of St Francis Xavier in Hereford (*Eye* 941), a Greek Revival building with a beautiful and intact early 19th century interior. At first the archbishop of Cardiff John Ward wanted to close the church and sell the site. Eventually, in response to local feeling and overtures from English Heritage, he reluctantly agreed to restore the building instead. But, whether through ideological inflexibility or sheer malice, the archbishop remained determined to reorder, and spoil, the interior in response to the supposed demands of the Second Vatican Council.

As so often happens, the historic churches committee proved itself to be the creature of the archbishop. The arguments of the objectors to the proposed reordering were ignored and an appeal was considered in closed session by two Cardiff priests and another archbishop who stood in for archbishop Ward (who, what with the criminal activities of his former private secretary exposed in a court of law and unfortunate accusations being made about his own behaviour, may have other things on his mind at the moment). Appeal dismissed, of course.

Similar things have happened in the case of the Church of St Mary and the Angels in Cardiff, a handsome building of 1907 designed by F.A. Walters. Controversial proposals for reordering were passed at a second meeting of the historic churches committee following pressure from the archbishop which was so blatant that the representative of the Victorian Society protested. There were other procedural irregularities and, as is customary, the minutes of the committee's meetings were either delayed or not supplied at all to objectors.

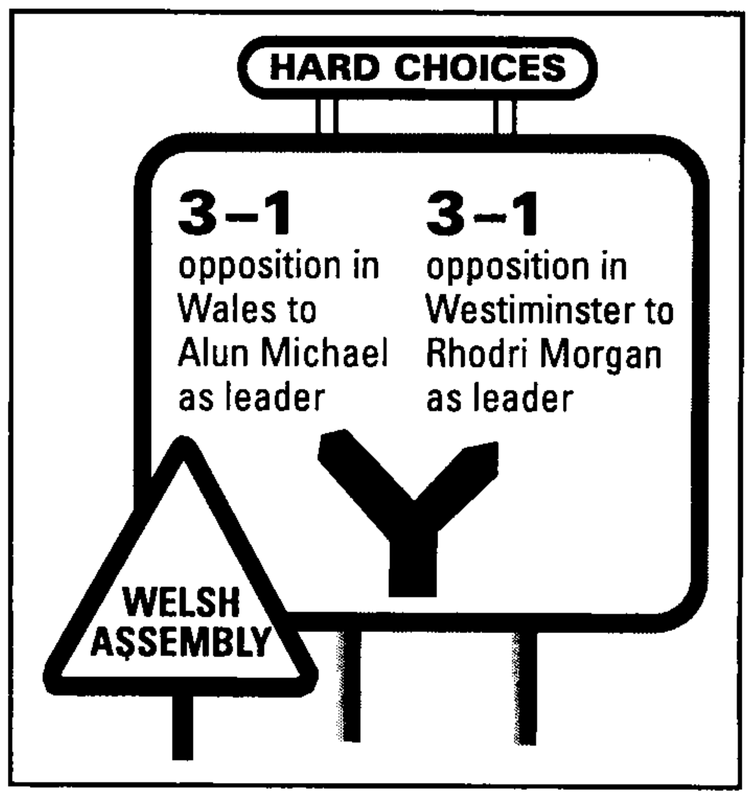
What all this shows is that the Roman Catholic hierarchy still cannot come to terms with the fact that the laity may have an opinion about the churches they worship in, even though the laity at St Mary's, Canton, will have to find the money required for all the alterations desired by the archbishop.

Now these reorderings may or may not be a good thing — perhaps it all depends on how sensitively they are done — but that is not the point. Nor is the issue one of democracy: it is one of truth. Typically, Archbishop Ward claimed in a letter to an objector that "the Church has made some very definite rulings about how a church should be re-ordered in the wake of the Second Vatican Council," and it is this that has encouraged governments — Conservative and Labour — to maintain the ecclesiastical exemption. But this is not, in fact, the case — as was recently made clear in a letter from Cardinal Ratzinger to the Bishop of Kildare accepted in evidence in a high court case in Dublin over objections to the reordering of Carlow Cathedral.

The Cardinal said: "The fact that the postconciliar legislation of the Church does not impose architectural changes, while at the same time not excluding them, provides the diocesan bishop with the necessary latitude for making decisions in light of the pastoral needs of his particular Church, taking into account also the situation in neighbouring dioceses. It is certainly true that a great number of churches since the Second Vatican Council have been re-arranged. Such changes, while inspired by the liturgical reform, cannot however be said to have been *required* by the legislation of the Church." So there. Again I say the ecclesiastical exemption must go.

MY PICTURE shows the celebrated Trinity Almshouses in Mile End, a beautiful and civilised and necessary institution built in 1695 whose threatened demolition by the Corporation of Trinity House in 1896 provoked protest and a monograph by C.R. Ashbee which became, effectively, the first volume of the Survey of London. These precious buildings are now owned by Tower Hamlets council and run by Holy Trinity Housing — and are becoming shockingly dilapidated through lack of maintenance and neglect. Why?

'Piloti'



ITV

Days Like These (ITV)
Walk On The Wild Side (ITV)
Boyz Unlimited (C4)
Get Your Act Together (BBC1)

FOR the last decade in the offices of television companies, no ideas meeting has been complete without some ageing executive declaring that something — comedy, cooking, gardening, poetry, football — was "the new rock 'n' roll". Wags predicted that there would eventually come a moment when, all other existing subjects having been either pioneered or revived on television, someone would confidently predict that "rock 'n' roll is the new rock 'n' roll".

This symptom of the exhaustion of both language and formats seems to have occurred at some point during last year's commissioning rounds. Four new series launched during the last 10 days are pop music shows of some kind: a sitcom, a documentary series, a spoof comedy and a talent contest.

Pop music — for, to be fair, it is 70s pop rather than rock which has turned out to be the new rock 'n' roll — appeals to telly for three reasons. The first is that the channels are currently in the hands of people in their late 30s or early 40s. Traditionally, executives of this age have tried to indicate their youthfulness by embracing the fashions of the young.

But — as can also be seen in movies, newspapers and publishing — this particular middleaged generation has found a different way to try to defy ageing. They try to revive the culture of their youth and inflict it on everyone else. Hence Blondie back at No. 1. Hence Rick Wakeman's new concept album *Return To The Centre Of The Earth*. Hence movies like *Hideous Kinky*, *Boogie Nights*, *The Ice Storm*. And hence, now, all these pop shows on British TV.

The commissions, however, are not motivated entirely by solipsism. The shows appeal to advertisers and ratings-hungry bosses at non-commercial stations because they will potentially attract a double audience: the middleaged drawn by nostalgia and the young who have fallen for the revival of their parents' culture. And, finally, there is a technical attraction. Pop music is now such an integral part of television — even reports on *Newsnight* and *Panorama* now almost inevitably have their ironically-titled pop song on the soundtrack — that it seems entirely logical to create series in which the music is foregrounded rather than backgrounded.

Of the pop shows brought to television by this combination of personal and commercial forces, **Walk On The Wild Side** (ITV) is

Vanessa blows it

a straightforward exercise in nostalgia. This is a history of Androgynous Rock, the 70s stars — Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Boy George, Adam Ant — who, through their adoption of make-up and floaty clothing, left censorious parents uncertain whether to lock up their sons or daughters or both. Although it tries to justify its occupation of a peak-time documentary slot through some passing analysis of masculinity and femininity, the series is no more than a TV version of *Boogie Nights* — a chance for viewers to remember where they were and wonder what they must have been on when they took all of these acts entirely seriously.

Days Like These (ITV) also looks back to the 70s in what is intended to be a spirit of amused nostalgia. Evidence that this new sitcom is a cynical demographic exercise can be deduced from the fact that its characters are middle class 17 year olds in 1976. This age-group are now likely to be relatively prosperous people in their late 30s: precisely the audience which ITV last year promised audiences it would court.

But, though perfect as a marketing concept, *Days Like These* fails as a comedy. It may seem a truism to say that nostalgia is best accomplished by people who were there at the time, but it is one which ITV has oddly ignored. The American producers behind the US original on which this sitcom is based (Fox's *The 70s Show*) have been charged with anglicising the format. Wisconsin becomes Luton, although the Bedfordshire teenagers hang out in the kind of vast American garage-cum-den familiar from *Happy Days* and other US brat shows but not common in the houses of British car workers now let alone then. And the speech has none of the compression common to the region — "Luton", for example, becoming "Lew-un" — but sounds strangely American: "Like I'm gonna sleep after that!"

Boyz Unlimited (C4), another music-based sitcom, looks for its comedy in 90s pop and, specifically, in the phenomenon of boy bands. The show spoofs the creation of a hit teen band by a sleazy manager. The sell for this was clearly "a Spinal Tap for the 90s" but it is vital in sending-up observational documentaries that the camera-work and the speech patterns of contributors are exact imitations of the actual form. Here, the acting and direction is sitcom emphatic.

Get Your Act Together (BBC1) is a talent show for young would-be pop stars which, with a cross-pollination which is becoming ever more common in television, grafts on to the *Opportunity Knocks* format some of the currently popular makeover format. Indeed, after *Changing Rooms*, this is a kind of *Changing Nerds*, in which wannabe stars are given 48 hours of grooming by professional producers and choreographers before competing for the votes of the audience. But the series simply hasn't understood that modern pop TV is about nostalgia. And who could be nostalgic for Sheena Easton, the only pop star produced by a television show for unknowns?

'Square Eyes'

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

HOW many people does Phoney Pharaoh Mohamed Fayed have working for him? With his habit of wandering round Harrods firing large numbers of workers according to mood (or because they are black, or fat, or refuse sex with him), it seems he has lost count.

"Tomorrow it is back to business and the needs of my 8,000 hard working employees," he told the considerably-less-than-8,000 readers of *Punch* in his new column. Only a few days earlier he had told Eamonn Holmes on the GMTV sofa that "I have 30,000 people working for me." Perhaps the extra 22,000 aren't hard working or include a number of MPs he forgot to declare before the election.

●●LISTENERS to Ireland's RTE radio station were somewhat bemused recently when Fayed fell silent while being interviewed by presenter Marian Finnucane. Finnucane soon explained all. "It has to be said that in the course of the interview, Mohamed Fayed and I disagreed on what constituted libel, and there are a lot of people who he seriously does not like in Britain, who were named in the course of that interview."

Finnucane then filled several minutes of airtime with a list of nearly 20 hate figures. They ranged from the predictable (Rosa Monckton, real friend of Diana and wife of *Sunday Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson) via the shocking (Frances Shand Kydd, Diana's mother, who is apparently "pathetic and stupid") to the downright inexplicable (Mark Thatcher, about whom Fayed's thoughts were unbroadcastable).

● A promotional video for George Benson's tribute to Dodi Fayed features a sad 10-minute interview with the soul star conducted by Fayed himself. Directed by his latest PR flunkey, ex-Sky news reader Laurie Mayer, the interlude reveals the truth about what inspired Dodi's terribly successful career as a film producer.

"I have started this business since when I was in Egypt. All the big movies, like *Killer-patra* [*sic*], *Ten Commandments*. My Egyptian company was handling all the background. From when he was a child he was seeing, coming to the set, excited to see all the battles and all the fantasy. And this goes straight to his mind. The only thing he wanna do in life just making movies."

This is yet another aspect of Fayed's early career which seems to have escaped the attention of his biographers. Although Halliwell and other film guides remain strangely silent on "*Killer-patra*", Cecil B. De Mille's epic *Ten Commandments* was released in 1956 when Fayed was working as a furniture salesman for Adnan Kashoggi and thinking about going into shipping. When the epic movie was being filmed on location in Egypt, Fayed's son was considerably less than one year old.

MEDIA NEWS

CHANNEL Five boss David Elstein said he was unconcerned by the broadcasting standards commission's (BSC) condemnation of the channel's late night "erotic drama series" such as *Compromising Situations*.

Apparently it is "intellectual freedom" that is at stake, rather than endless post-watershed tits and titillation. Privately, however, controllers at the station are rather more dubious about any situations that might compromise their licence.

Jack Docherty recently closed his late night chatshow with the words "In line with Channel Five policy it's past eleven O'clock and time for some tatty pornography", and began to mime oral sex on a man dressed in a police uniform who had come round to deliver a pizza.

Strangely the incident never made it into the final cut of the show which went out that evening...

IN THE furore over another faked documentary, media commentators seem to have forgotten that some programme makers are capable of producing pisspoor programmes all by themselves without resorting to fiction.

Carlton had a third complaint upheld against it's *Wanna Buy a Big Cat?* programme, which was part of the now axed *Big Story* series last October. The programme was billed as an investigation into the sale of exotic animals and the breaking of Zoo Federation guidelines, and its major "success" was in buying a rare Illiger's macaw from Paradise Park, a conservation centre in Cornwall.

The broadcasting standards commission found in favour of the park, which was unfairly represented by the programme — just as it and the ITC found for two other zoos who were secretly filmed and strongly criticised in the programme without any right of reply.

"Paradise Park were acting in good faith when they sold the parrot. There was no suggestion of illegal behaviour or cruelty," ruled the BSC. The centre, which has an outstanding record for breeding rare birds, is still trying to retrieve the parrot from the bogus company set up by Carlton, which has made no effort to pair the bird with a mating partner as promised as a condition of sale.

LUVVIES

"I bet you're worried. I was worried. That's why I began this piece. I was worried about the vaginas. I was worried about what we think about vaginas, and even more worried that we don't think about them. I was worried about my own vagina. It needed a context of other vaginas — a community, a culture of vaginas."

EVE ENSLER
"The Vagina Monologues"

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

AUTHOR and broadcaster Mark Simpson was a particularly interested observer of Channel 4's recent series *The Divine David Presents*.

In January 1997 Simpson took a proposal for a late-night underground cabaret to one of C4's commissioning editors, Jacquie Lawrence. The proposed series would star "The Divine David", an anarchic drag act, and feature performers from London club Duckie's. Lawrence seemed enthusiastic at first, saying she was "more than happy to push it where I can". She was particularly taken with Simpson's line that the show would be "televisual terrorism".

By December 1997, however, she had gone cold on the idea. So imagine Simpson's surprise a few months later when he heard that C4 had put together a pilot show entitled *Terrorvision*, which went on to become *The Divine David Presents*, a late-night underground cabaret series featuring, er, performers from London club Duckie's.

When Simpson met Lawrence and asked where she had got this suspiciously similar idea from, she explained that it had been "an organic and convoluted process". To cheer him up, she offered Simpson a consolation prize — the chance to work on a thrilling new Channel 4 series about lesbian cruising and chat-up techniques.

THE END OF THE WORLD SERVICE IS NIGH

WHEN Sam Younger was pushed aside as chief executive of BBC World Service last autumn in favour of the anodynely Birtist fortysomething Mark Byford, long suffering staff and listeners knew the game was finally up for one of the more venerable and once the most respected of public service broadcasters.

Leaks that German, Czech and Arabic language services were under threat of closure have been unconvincingly sidestepped by the new axe-wielder-in-chief, who argued ominously that in a dynamic environment many aspects of the World Service would have to be kept under review.

Most European language services have seen a major loss in audience since the end of the cold war. But the main problem with the Arabic network appears connected mostly with upstart members of staff insisting on a fair deal and on several occasions forcing a now vengeful, albeit incompetent, management to back down.

Other changes, however, appear to be taking place more quietly. Until the infamous "restructuring" of the BBC in 1996, when the seeds of the World Service's now terminal decline were first sown, Bush House had its own newsgathering operation, distinct from domestic services. This reflected the difference in editorial outlook of one network, for whom a royal visit or a British backpacker in trouble might constitute foreign news, and another with a more global agenda, unable so easily to ignore a cabinet reshuffle in Bangladesh or irritating little wars in Africa.

To a storm of protest the restructuring included the merging of the two units.

The new slimmed-down, World Service-bereft newsgathering has already moved quickly to take tough decisions. Funding has been withdrawn for the Sri Lanka post, and the Middle East Affairs analyst job at Bush House is to go. Uncertainty surrounds the fate of sponsored strings in a dozen other of the world's less fashionable capital cities.

Cost-cutting and efficiency savings are needed to pay for the ludicrous lurch towards oblivion that Byford and other hatchet people within the BBC are determined to take the World Service. Already much of a reputation for integrity and depth of coverage established over more than 60 years at radio has been compromised by BBC World, the corporation's inept copy of CNN that on a bad day can even make its unconsciously hilarious domestic twin, News24, look good.

"World", which is now available but not necessarily watched in millions of homes around the world, is controlled not by Bush House but by the ever-expanding empire of continuous news, and has long been a depository for those whose face no longer fits elsewhere in the corporation. Soon to climb aboard is housewives' favourite Martyn Lewis, a prospect that horrifies producers contemplating his chances of making it through an interview on the political situation in Angola or the financial crisis in Asia.

And as it was at television and newsgathering, so shall it now be at radio. Before the Commons public accounts committee, Byford last week confirmed plans to force Bush House into adopting the new orthodoxy of rolling news preached with such fervour by its apostles back at the self-styled "News Centre" in White City, despite the fact that as a concept it is relentlessly dull and repetitive, replacing news merely with what is new, without the time or resources properly to develop or explain the complex stories once at the core of the World Service's success.

In fact World Service already carries bulletins on the hour and has several dedicated current affairs programmes. In places like Sierra Leone and Somalia, specialist programmes are now the only source of independent information and are so influential as to bring wars temporarily to a halt.

That, though, is a vision of public service broadcasting for which John Birt and others expressed distaste in 1996.

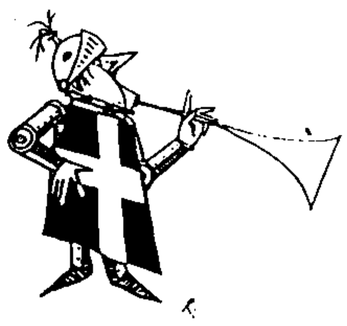
Plugged In

DISH RESPECT

Pundits said Sky wouldn't last — but 10 years on it's got 20m viewers in 7m homes... Its three movie channels have screened more than 7,000 different films since launching... Sky Sports will be broadcasting more than 20,000 hours of programming this year... four months ago SkyDigital became Britain's first digital television platform...

Report on Sky TV's 10th birthday
Sun

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.



EYE TOLD YOU SO

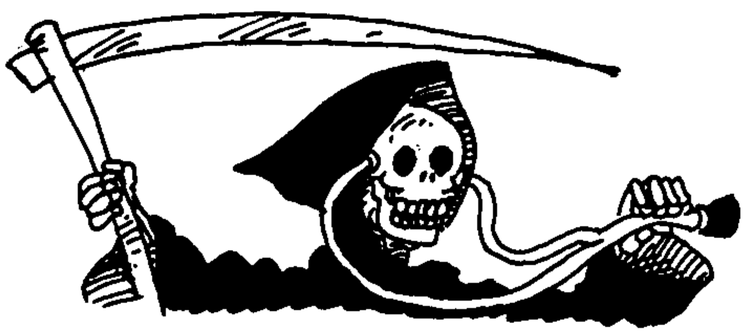
Vanessa was shot in Norwich and it is well-known that students from the University of East Anglia used to supplement their income... by getting on to the show as á guest under the guise of some bizarre invented lifestyle aspect...

You'd think that *Trisha* might have been on alert... The problem is that people who want to appear on TV and make a bob or two have wised-up to the existence of this television market which is desperate for people who represent moral or ethical dilemmas. It's pretty obvious that there now exists a kind of music hall circuit of neuroses, on which would-be performers tour largely spurious conditions to researchers made credulous by their deadlines...

— Square Eyes reviewing *Trisha*, 2 October 1998.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

BIG SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT
ISLINGTON PUBS ARE GREAT FOR THIS, QUIN
YOU CAN SIT IN A BAR WITH OTHER FANS AND ENJOY THE ACTION
DKNY
THE LATE REVIEW
THERE'S ONLY ONE MARK LAWSON



DOING THE ROUNDS

ASKED about the availability of specialist stroke care (see *Eye* 967), health secretary Frank Dobson's department — whose white paper last year was called *A First Class Service: Quality in the New NHS* — responded with classic buckpassing.

M.D. reported how 4,500 lives a year could be saved and the level of disability suffered by stroke survivors greatly reduced, if the 100,000 patients who suffer a stroke annually had access to specialist care. Continuing the theme, Labour MP Harry Barnes (north-east Derbyshire) asked Dobson: "What right have stroke victims or their relatives have to insist on patients' treatment in specialist stroke units?"

The written answer from Dobson's gofer John Hutton was illuminating. "Following a stroke patients are entitled to expect that an appropriate service will be provided. But that service will not necessarily be within a specialist stroke unit. The organisation of health authorities services, including those of people who have had a stroke, and the manner in which they are delivered are matters for the health authority taking account of the needs of the local population and the priorities set for the use of the available resources."

In other words a direct contradiction of Dobson's promise in the white paper that "all patients should receive a first class service. The unacceptable variations that have grown up in recent years must end."

Stroke is the commonest cause of disability in the UK and the third biggest killer, so it is a shame Dobbo seems so clueless about the state of care. Mr Barnes asked for an estimate of the money spent on stroke care each year, the percentage of the NHS budget used, how many specialist stroke units there are, how many patients they treat and an estimate of their effectiveness. The answer? "The information requested is not available." Yes it is (in *Eye* 967).

While patchy care continues, doctors themselves have been saying what *they* would insist on if they fell ill. In the *Lancet* last October, Dr Kennedy R. Lees from Glasgow's Western Infirmary wrote, under the heading *If I had a stroke...*, "I would choose a hospital with an expressed interest in stroke and preferably acute-stroke unit." So should everyone.

● IT is not just stroke victims for whom more could be done. Dr John G.F. Cleland, from the department of cardiology at Hull's Castle Hill Hospital, described in the *Lancet* last year how the death from heart failure of patients who didn't have access to "inexpensive and cost-effective treatment" was akin to "involuntary euthanasia".

Strong words. But the evidence that putting such patients on drugs called ACE inhibitors reduces their chance of death is equally strong. We've known this for years and yet many patients are still denied this treatment. In America this would spark legal action. Here we take whatever the NHS gives us.

The involuntary euthanasia tag is dangerous, however, as it would seem to apply to every area of medicine where some patients are denied life-saving treatment which is available to others (eg acute stroke care). If everyone who's had a heart attack, angina, stroke or mini-stroke took an aspirin every day, they would reduce their risk of death. At present only half of them do, so an estimated 13,400 people each year die unnecessarily. Is this involuntary euthanasia?

● THE quality of cancer care is equally variable. As Professor Karol Sikora of Hammersmith Hospital says: "To get the best possible care, to get the best possible results, to have the best possible chance of surviving you have to make sure that all the expertise is given to you. You can only get that if you see someone that's dealing with a large number of patients with cancer and preferably part of a team that's dealing with specific cancer such as that of the breast or the lung."

And is everyone getting it? "It's very disheartening for me as a professional to know that we have the skill in this country to treat people very effectively and yet 15,000 people or more are dying each year because they're not getting the best possible cancer care," says the professor.

The most alarming variation is in rectal cancer surgery where chances of survival vary seven-fold depending on who operates. Frank Dobson may dream of "a First Class service in which there is no room for second best" but it is a million miles from reality.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

NO ONE can say our government has not been brilliantly successful in at least one area in recent years: covering up the appalling damage done to the health of thousands of farmers by our old friends OPs, those delightful nerve gas-related organo-phosphorus chemicals.

Since the government officially licenses these highly toxic pesticides as safe to use in the first place, it might of course be embarrassing, not to say expensive, to admit that they are not actually as safe as the government has claimed.

So tactic number one is to claim there is "no evidence" that OPs cause any chronic health damage. The second is to make sure that no such evidence is ever allowed to see the light of day. This is done by ensuring that any investigations are carried out only by officially-approved and funded scientists, who can be relied on to come up with the findings the government and OP manufacturers want.

Because the public is not officially allowed to know just how dangerous these chemicals can be, people often use them in highly reckless fashion, with devastating consequences not just for humans but for animals and wildlife.

A chilling instance was experienced just before Christmas by Tony Taylor, who farms near Sevenoaks. On a Sunday afternoon, 30 November, a fumigation exercise was carried out in a poultry farm next to a field in which Mr Taylor had 12 ewes. A fine spray was seen drifting over the field. Within hours his sheep were sickening. Within days eight were dead. When police were called in, two police dogs also became seriously ill.

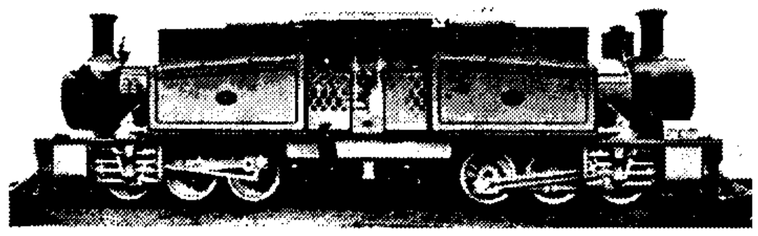
Mr Taylor asked the poultry farm's owner, Grampian Farming, what it had been spraying with. He was told "detergent". He rang the local MAFF office to report the incident, and was told it was no concern of MAFF if sheep suddenly sickened and died. But he then obtained evidence that the shed had been sprayed with Antec EC-Kill, a highly-toxic OP used in poultry houses to kill red mite. Armed with this evidence, he approached the MAFF Veterinary Investigation Centre at Winchester, which took two dead sheep away for analysis.

Tests confirmed that the sheep had died of OP poisoning. So Mr Taylor now knew how he had lost his eight ewes, on paper worth around £700. But much good it has done him. Grampian now admits it used OPs in its sheds but denies this was connected to the death of the sheep.

Sevenoaks environmental health officers tried to carry out their own investigation. But when they contacted the relevant government bodies, such as MAFF and the health and safety executive (HSE), they were given a complete brush-off, even though it was MAFF's own lab which had confirmed that OPs were the culprit.

After all, if government officials start openly admitting that government-approved OPs can actually cause health problems, who knows where it might end? Possibly in a very major public health scandal, with millions of pounds having to be paid in compensation. And that would never do. Much better to keep quiet and allow people to go on using these poisons as recklessly as they wish.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Connex

LAST month Vivendi, the French owner of Connex, was rapped over the knuckles for an advertisement claiming that Connex operates 17 percent of the British railway network and "each day satisfies better and better the demands of passengers".

The Advertising Standards Authority recognised this for the tosh that it was, citing a recent survey that showed customers were less satisfied than before. But the first half of the claim — that Connex operates 17 percent of the network — is true, which is unfortunate for millions of people in the south-east and for the Tory MPs who forced rail privatisation through.

Among them was Nicholas Soames, the larger than life MP for Mid Sussex, who recently decided to check how his constituents were enjoying the benefits of train services provided by caring and lively entrepreneurs (*Shurely "a money-grabbing French utility whose most notable investment is in automatic ticket barriers at stations"? Ed.*)

The constituents were eager to tell him. "Given that over 400 surveys were returned, I do believe that the results send some very clear messages," said Soames, who ignored the same clear messages when privatisation was being prepared. Respondents told him that value for money, punctuality, provision of seats and a host of other basic requirements were poor under the area's private operators (chiefly Connex).

Of the 18 factors listed on Soames' survey, only two were rated as good — the attitude of staff on the station and on the train. And what is Connex doing with its staff, the one aspect of Connex its customers appreciate? It's shedding as many as possible, replacing many with machines and union-busting staff from recruitment agencies.

A survey of Connex white-collar staff found 60 percent believed the company provided a poor service largely because of staff shortages. The survey also revealed that three-quarters of admin staff and managers wanted to leave Connex asap. "Connex is riddled with bullying, communications are terrible, staff simply don't trust the company and they don't believe managers have any sense of direction," said the non-militant TSSA union, whose planned strike was called off when Connex belatedly agreed to discuss claims of low morale and unfair treatment. "The relationship between senior managers and staff has completely broken down."

Combining its franchises cut Connex's overheads but has a remarkable side-effect (purely coincidental of course). Last year Connex was dismayed when it failed to bully the government into extending its seven-year South Central franchise to match its 15-year term on South Eastern. Merging the franchises now allows Connex to strip out many head office staff, putting it in a position to rebid cheaply for South Central in a few years' time — against rivals who must pay to set up a new head office for South Central and recruit the middle managers Connex thinks it can do without.

'Dr B. Ching'

"It's repetitive strain injury mein Führer"

Pseuds Corner

Like most good ideas, the premise behind *Come Together* [by Josie Lloyd and Emlyn Rees] was a simple one, deftly executed. "The real magic of the book," says Emlyn, "is the space between the chapters."

Daily Telegraph

Warm oysters appeared in their shells on a bed of scrambled egg with a subtle chive *veloute*. They were topped with salmon caviar, a touch that worked. This was a splendid simple dish.

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
Daily Telegraph

The Vestal and the Fasces
Hegel, Lacan, Property, and the Feminine
by Jeanne L. Schroeder

In this feminist exploration of the erotics of the marketplace, Hegel's notion of property and Lacan's idea of the phallus serve parallel functions in creating the subjectivity necessary for self-actualisation.

University of California Press advertisement, London Review of Books

Standing Committee For The M.S.T. In Women's Studies: Annual Visiting Lecture in Women's Studies
PROFESSOR ANN PELLEGRINI, Harvard, will deliver the Annual Visiting Lecture in Women's Studies at 5pm on Tuesday, 19 January, in the Examination Schools. Subject: 'Passionate attachments out of order: meditations on Judy Garland's body.'

Oxford University Gazette

INSPIRATION FIGURE: Camilla Parker-Bowles
HATE FIGURE: Cool Britannia
SHOP: Wabi Sabi, South Street, Chichester; exquisite taste, we all must go!
SONG OR PIECE OF MUSIC: *Cosi Fan Tutte*, on a beautiful summer evening at Glyndebourne.
SPECIAL TREAT: Another invitation to Balmoral.

STEFAN VAN RAAY
'The Questionnaire: My favourite things', Chichester Observer

I really don't want to sound like some wacky, new age type, but what I've learned from doing this show is that there is something called a cunt brain. Before this, the sense I had of myself was through my ideas and work. Like lots of women, all my motor was in my brain, and I was entirely disconnected from my body. But I started to live in my vagina and I think there's a wisdom there that's not to be found in the mind.

EVE ENSLER (creator of The Vagina Monologues) in the Guardian

In a fictional desert, a convoy of nuns and priests conduct perverted interrogations and dance ecstatic, plastic, delirious and demented. They sweat out their histories and secrets and concoct a strange book of past and future — cluttered with neurotic leaps and bursts, illogical conclusions and an alarming abundance of uncoordinated and idiosyncratic dance... Dancing like the devil has just knocked on the car door.

'Hanging out with Jesus', Talieson Arts Centre, Swansea

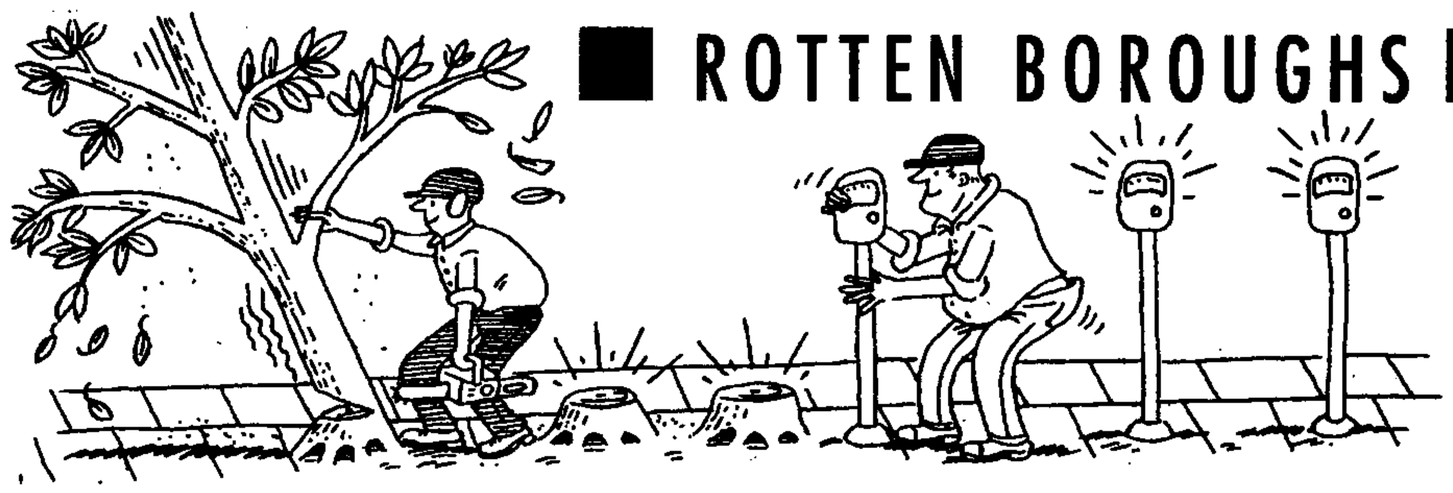
Wright: How can we build up an audience for contemporary classical music?

Boulez: Well you 'av the three day Festival with nothing but viola music. Then you 'av the Chinese music Festival, then you 'av the Stockhausen Festival, then you 'ope the Chinese go to the Stockhausen, then you 'ope the viola go to the Chinese, then you 'ope the Stockhausen go to the viola.

ROGER WRIGHT (Controller of Radio 3) & PIERRE BOULEZ in BBC TV Interview

CONTRIBUTORS: S. Hughes, Sylvia Crookes, Michael Lane, R.B. Peberdy, Peter Le Feuvre, Katie Wales, Sean Barr, Keith Burstein.

£10 paid for entries



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

MAYOR CULPA?

SENIOR Tory councillor Alex Segal is proud to have been chosen as Westminster's "Millennium Lord Mayor" for the 12 months starting in May.

It is somewhat embarrassing, therefore, that he has had to step down as a magistrate while the lord chancellor's department investigates allegations that he abused his position by awarding a liquor licence to two shops in Putney in which until recently he had a financial stake.

Just before the licensing hearing in October Segal, a solicitor, declared his interest: he had owned the shops until May, he said, but they had since been sold twice and he saw no reason why he should not adjudicate. Records show that he was a shareholder of Parsons Green Reproductions Ltd, the company that owned the freehold of the shops seeking the licence, until February 1998, and that he did not resign as a director until July.

Segal was lucky to escape surcharge over the Westminster "Homes For Votes" scandal in the 1980s. The auditor's report into the affair found that although Segal was not guilty of "wilful, misconduct" he knew what former council leader Dame Shirley Porter and her gang were up to and that it was wrong.

● LOYAL Westminster Tories have not turned their backs on Dame Shirl — far from it. Along with 14 other former Tory councillors and their partners, Porter has been invited to the council's civic dinner on 4 March at the five-star Landmark Hotel in Marylebone Road. The event will cost council taxpayers £20,000 — a snip compared to the savings the Tories are making by lopping £500,000 off the schools budget and by increasing the rents of 20,000 council tenants by 8 percent!

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, SPECULATION...

AN interesting test of Labour's willingness to fulfil its promises on education has landed on David Blunkett's desk.

The education secretary is due to rule by 22 March on whether Labour-controlled Hertfordshire council can close one of the smallest junior schools in the county, Gaddesden Row, in a village north of Hemel Hempstead.

The parents of its 28 pupils want it kept open, as do local Labour MP Tony McWalter and more than 4,800 locals who signed a petition. Despite extensive consultation last year, the education committee overrode these views and scheduled closure for the summer.

Parents hope Blunkett will stand by the manifesto commitment that "Labour will never force the abolition of good schools, whether in the private or the state sector", and the statement of Stephen Byers, when education standards minister, in February last year: "When a school closes, a village loses a vital focus."

The council's insistence that the school must go perplexes parents. The maximum that could be saved by closure would be a minuscule £40,000 out of a county junior schools budget of £143m. The latest Ofsted report says the school "provides sound value for money" and its test results are above county and national averages.

The county says the school is only "half full", with 28 pupils when it has room for 55. But last year the county made Gaddesden Row *turn away* potential pupils because it had already filled its quota of just eight in any year group.

The governors of Markyate junior school, three miles away, put in a statutory objection to Gaddesden Row's closure. Hertfordshire education planning manager Paul Wray then so alarmed the Markyate governors with talk of "financial consequences" if they persisted in their objection they withdrew it — although they have shamefacedly told local radio they still support the school.

So why are officials so keen to shut a happy, successful village school? The council suggests it could make a very modest £275,000 from the sale of the building and four-bedroomed caretaker's house. There would be little, however, to stop the council granting planning permission for new "executive homes" on the site — a prime greenbelt position with lovely views. One local developer estimates that with such permission the site would be worth around £1.5m.

● IAN WINGFIELD, chief whip in Labour-controlled Southwark, has been ordered to vet correspondence between his fellow Labour councillors to ensure that all views expressed are "on message".

His first loyalty test? That councillors must not stray off-message by questioning the vetting policy!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Finance chiefs at Ealing town hall are struggling to find ways to maintain social services... Council bosses are anxious to plug a shortfall of about £2.5m..."

— *Ealing Gazette*, 22 January, page 4.

"Huge rises in expenses for councillors... will cost the town hall an extra £396,000 [a year]."

— *Ealing Gazette*, 22 January, page 7.

RETIREMENT OF THE WEEK

SO, farewell then Bradford council chief executive Richard Penn, one of the first municipal barons to break the £100,000 a year salary barrier. He has retired on the grounds of ill health.

Penn was hired 10 years ago to replace an incumbent whose face did not fit the new political regime under Tory leader Eric Pickles. His own sick leave follows the election last year of new Labour council leader John Greenwood.

Happily, before Penn went he negotiated a handy and enhanced pension of £45,000 a year for life. Even more happily, he will eke out this meagre stipend thanks to a consultancy with the association of local authority chief executives — advising on contracts and pay-offs!

NICE TRY, NO SCORE

EXCELLENT bullshitting from former Anglesey council leader Gareth Winston Roberts, who was called before Anglesleaze's new standards committee, which was formed after two damning district auditor's reports last year (see *Eyes passim*).

Roberts had to explain why he spent public money taking two chums to a Wales-Ireland rugby international in Cardiff. He said they were "experts in Welsh-Irish affairs" whose advice he valued. Er, and jobs would eventually be created as a result of such "research" — which cost £2,500 for accommodation, hospitality and tickets.

The committee was so moved by his rhetoric it found him guilty of misconduct and the full council later suspended him for three months.

POLICE 5

"Is this your vehicle, sonny?"

THE proud police tradition that wrongdoing exposed after a conveniently-timed retirement should not affect an officer's pension is not confined to England, Wales and Scotland. It has an integral part of the discipline of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as is proved by the rather unsavoury case of former chief inspector Alex Allerton.

Eighteen months ago, in August 1997, Mr Allerton was charged with indecently assaulting a 12-year-old girl. He was immediately suspended on full pay and soon afterwards, aged 60, retired from the force on full pension.

At the trial the chief inspector's plea of not guilty led to a long and distressing cross-examination of the girl. The officer was found guilty. Sentence has been adjourned to 2 March. Since he is now retired, however, he will not face disciplinary charges and his pension is intact.

"THE force will not tolerate lewd homosexual acts in public places." Thus spake Superintendent Val Barker of Southport police, explaining why he is sending comely, undercover male police to the local dunes, public lavatories and other pick-up spots.

In the squadroom, the undercover men are jokingly referred to as "the Lycra shorts lads", but Supt Barker thinks it no laughing matter. He vows that offenders will be prosecuted — and thus "named and shamed".

The exciting new initiative is already producing results. Last week a man was fined £250 at Liverpool crown court after an officer testified that he had observed the defendant "playing with himself" at a urinal. The man, who was convicted of importuning, was named and shamed as, er, Detective Sergeant David Skirvin of the local Special Branch.

DIANABALLS

Lady Di's Bruschetta
One slice of bread, 2 small slices of smoked bacon, 1 egg, 2 champignon mushrooms, 1 spoon of extra-virgin olive oil.

— *How to make Bruschetta* by Marta Fisher.

The Dianameter counts, as a symbol of grief and mourning, the seconds since Princess Diana's tragic death on August 31, 1997.

— Application that can be installed on Palmpilot electronic organiser.

Letters

Private Eye

Hoddle twaddle

Sir,

I am a disabled broadcaster, who happens also to be an international sportsman and a practising Christian. So, as you might imagine, I responded on several levels to the Glenn Hoddle saga this week. The whole sorry episode has left me in despair about this country: most of all about its un-moral (not immoral) and bloodthirsty media, least of all about Glenn Hoddle's alleged beliefs. I don't believe in reincarnation, so why worry about supposed sins in a previous life? If Glenn had said: "We are all sinners — in this life", would there have been an outcry then?

I would like to say that when I first saw your front cover picture this week, my first response was: "Oh no, not the Eye on the let's-shaft-Hod-band-wagon, too." But when I read the caption, all was forgiven. Thank you for making me laugh in a very sad week. Yours, hoping never to come back in a future life as a journalist working for News International or its ilk,

FRED DOVE,

Via e-mail.

Snookered

Sir,

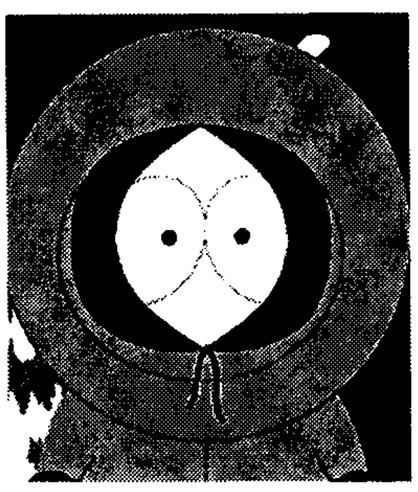
Sunday night's excellent documentary on the Stephen Lawrence case, "Why Stephen?" included discussion of allegations that the media had not given as much priority to the issue as they might have done.

It was delayed by the snooker.

ANDY MABBETT,

Great Barr, Birmingham.

Lookalike



Robbie

Kenny

Sir,

Have any of your readers noticed the startling similarity between Kenny, the world famous singing star who dies every week in front of millions, and Robbie Williams, the world famous star of South Park who dies every week in front of millions? Are they by any chance related? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
PATRICK BERGOT,

Crawley, West Sussex.

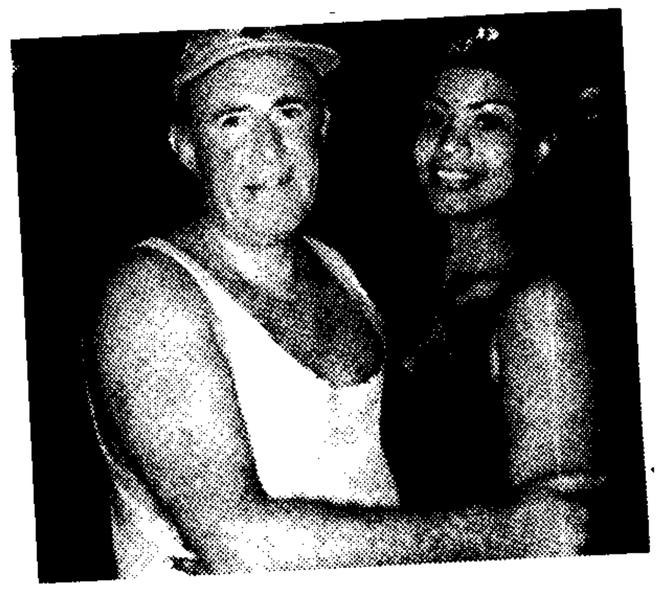
Photo opportunity

Sir,

I seem to remember in a past issue of your organ a photograph of a tender scene between a handsome PT instructor and a sixth former taken during what Mr Chris Woodhead would call an educative moment. Would you by any chance still have a copy in your archives? If so, perhaps you could publish it, as in the light of recent events I think it would help us to have a better understanding of these tragic relationships.

Yours hopefully,
A. TEACHER,

High Wycombe, Bucks.



Once were warriors

Sir,

Your cartoon (Eye 969) about the Zulu Tactics Seminar was wrong, as any viewer of the film Zulu over the last 35 years will tell you.

The Zulus did not use a massive solid square formation, but one modelled on the head of a fighting bull buffalo: "Head", "Chest" and "Loins".

"A lot of people know that."

I remain,
Yours pedantically,
ANTHONY DAVID JONES,

Ashton u Lyne, Lancs.

O·B·N·K

I think he's the best producer in radio and television that I've worked with. That's a simple fact. He is. He's fantastic with ideas — how they should be shot, how they should be lit. It's an extraordinary art, and ability that he's got.

WILL MACDONALD
(on his boss Chris Evans)
Epigram Magazine

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Suck on this

Sir,

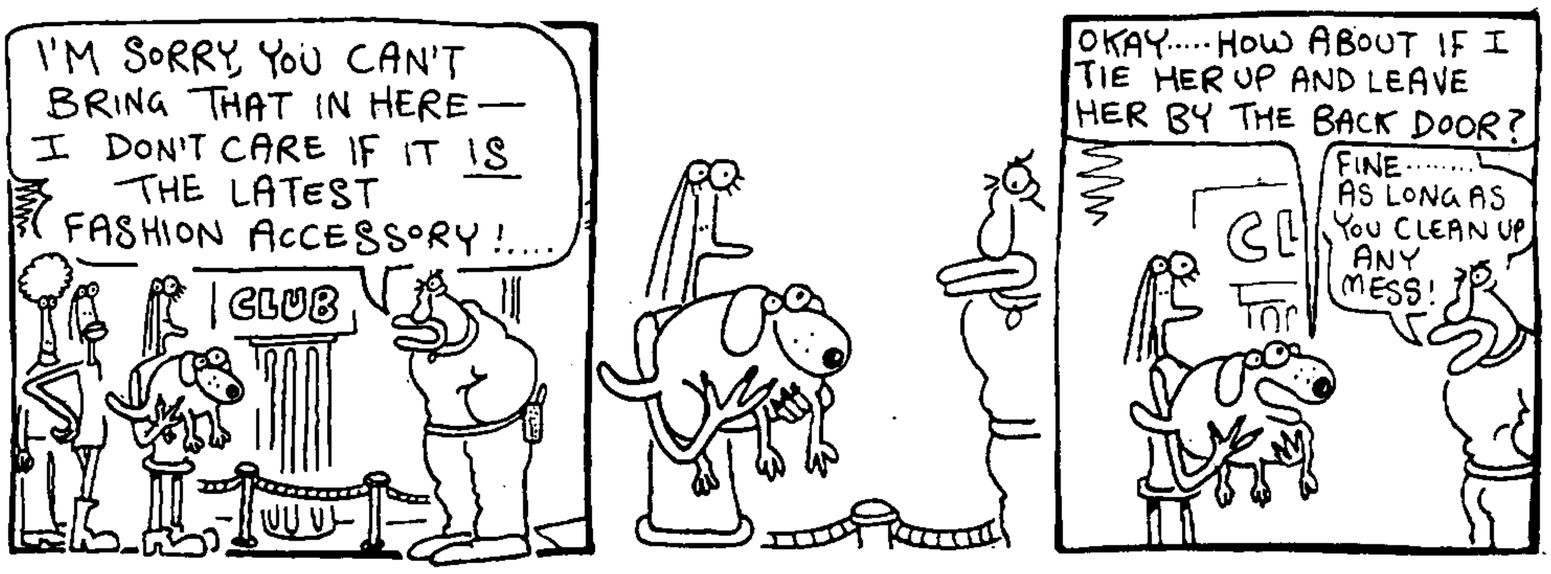
Thank you once again for raising the profile of breast feeding (Funny Old World, Eye 969). However, I must point out to the cartoonist that he has depicted a baby nipple-sucking, not breast feeding properly. No wonder the mother looks a bit pained! The baby won't be getting any milk this way, and may damage the nipple so the mother needs to take him off and latch him on again, getting the areola as well as the nipple into his mouth. Also, we should see the back of the baby's head as he feeds if he's positioned correctly and most women would lift their clothes up from the waist rather than undo the buttons down the front, so the breasts would be completely covered by clothes and baby. So, other than those few small points, well done for highlighting the fact that women can feed their own children, though I would say it's better to travel by public transport than drive while doing so.

Yours sincerely,
RUTH HOLT,

Wallingford, Didcot & District Branch, NCT.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


I'M SORRY, YOU CAN'T BRING THAT IN HERE— I DON'T CARE IF IT IS THE LATEST FASHION ACCESSORY!....
CLUB
OKAY.... HOW ABOUT IF I TIE HER UP AND LEAVE HER BY THE BACK DOOR?
FINE..... AS LONG AS YOU CLEAN UP ANY MESS!

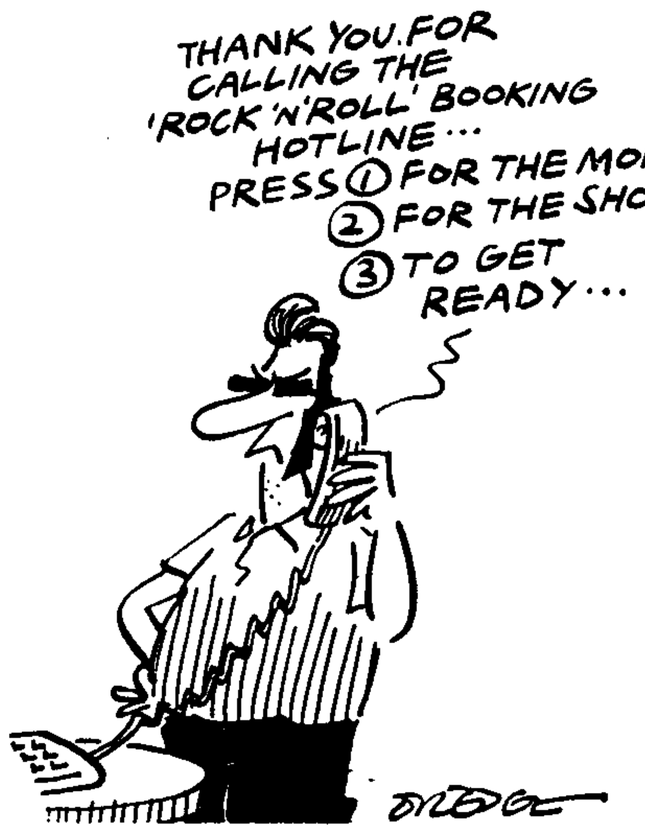
Russell athletic

Sir,

Music & Musicians (Eye 969) rightly reprehended Russell Davies for unfairly dismissing Albert Nicholas' important contribution to jazz history in Jazz Century (Radio 3).

It was unjust of your columnist, however, to overlook Davies' past excellent track record for jazz documentaries, eg the first for Radio 3 on such pioneering figures as Buddy Bolden, King Oliver and Sidney Bechet: all produced by David Perry. So I would suggest that this team was more than qualified to present and produce such a series.

Sincerely,
H.S. BULTITUDE,
Tregardon, Dyfed.



Wings clipped

Sir,

Over the years I've had many a chortle from the usual collection of disenchanted correspondents who take pedantic issue with the revelations on your pages.

I've laughed when saddos write asking that you cancel their subscription due to their inability to comprehend satire.

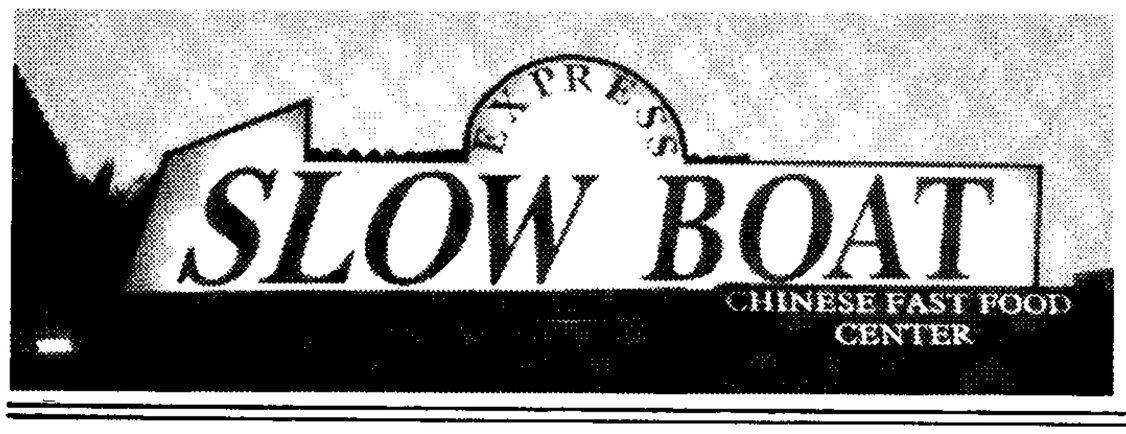
I didn't laugh at your pisstake of the death of Linda McCartney (Eye 969). I'm disappointed then, to find myself asking your subscriptions department to cancel my sub — and send the remains of the cost of my present sub to a charity which assists either research into the subject — or to one which helps those facing imminent death whilst being laughed at by the smug.

There are limits. Even for Private Eye.

FRANK DE PELLETTE,
London.

● This issue's cancelled subscriptions

Linda McCartney	2
Hoddle cover	1
Square Eyes on sex	1
McLachlan's Grim Reaper	1



I-SPY

Tenerife

Submitted by Jeremy Davis. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Collective Responsibility

Sir,

Re: Your piece about Abu Hamza. As Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Home Office I had no responsibility whatsoever for immigration and nationality issues, and was not consulted over who was and was not granted citizenship.

DAVID MELLOR,
Via fax.

The Euro – A Catalyst for Change

By Baroness Crawler
Deputy Leader European Labour party
MEP for Birmingham East

EC Information Project

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"King Hussein is fighting for his life tonight – it's a battle he seems destined, finally, to lose."
BBC Radio 4 News
(Anon)

"I have a feeling that, if she had been playing against herself, she would have won that point."
BOB HEWITT, Eurosport
(Barbara Gwinnell)

"Getting your first serve in is a great way to avoid double faults."
JOHN FITZGERALD, Ch. 7 TV, Australia
(David G. Robertson)

"James Hewitt has caused Princess Diana a lot of distress in her life, and now he is going to cause her even more after her death."
PIERS MORGAN, Radio Aire
(Anon)

Zoe Ball: *So, do you have any brothers and sisters?*
Child contestant: *A baby brother.*
Zoe Ball: *Really? So is it a boy or a girl?*
Radio 1
(C. Llewellyn)

"I think I represent the politically ignorant mass of Londoners, in that I've always voted Labour..."
BERYL BAINBRIDGE, Today Programme
(D. Clifford)

Letter from **Zimbabwe**

from Our Own Correspondent

THERE are better ways to launch a public relations offensive than by beating up, electrocuting and illegally detaining journalists. Someone should tell our army this.

After calls in Britain for your government to arrest our president Robert Mugabe, Mugabe announced the creation of a taskforce to do something about our image abroad. Taking him too literally, some soldiers who were bored kicking their heels at home and miffed at not being let loose on Congo's diamond mines like their buddies, decided to kick a couple of journalists instead who had written less than complimentary stories about the military.

One hack even suggested (God forbid) that elements in the military were less than loyal to their commander-in-chief, Comrade Mugabe. But as the comrade in question observed: "If you mess with the military, our boys will come and sort you out".

Mugabe's opponents, even some of his friends, say he had to support the army publicly because it is now the real power in the land. If so, journalists, judges and human rights activists better beware. After 10 days in military hands (and booted feet), our subversive scribes were charged with publishing false news likely to cause "alarm and despondency".

Critics, of whom there are many, say that if this is a crime the entire government should be arrested as it is responsible for the despondency which is rife here. Would you trust a bunch of ageing, Maoist guerilla leaders to run even a tiny cul de sac off the 21st century's global economic highway? Thought not. Much less the people who live at number 25 Zim Close. But they refuse to budge.

They have no difficulty spending money. After coming to power they pulled off a PR coup at home and abroad by providing free and universal education and healthcare. But then it was all downhill. After 10 years public debt had piled up and they realised someone had to pay for it — something they've been struggling to do ever since.

Strangely they don't seem to like other people earning money unless they're fellow comrades. Even then they knock on the door for loans until the comrades too are sucked under. Then it's "loans, what loans?" Ask poor Roger Boka, a "champion of black empowerment" while he had the cash but now reduced to being known as "Crooked Roger the dodgy banker".

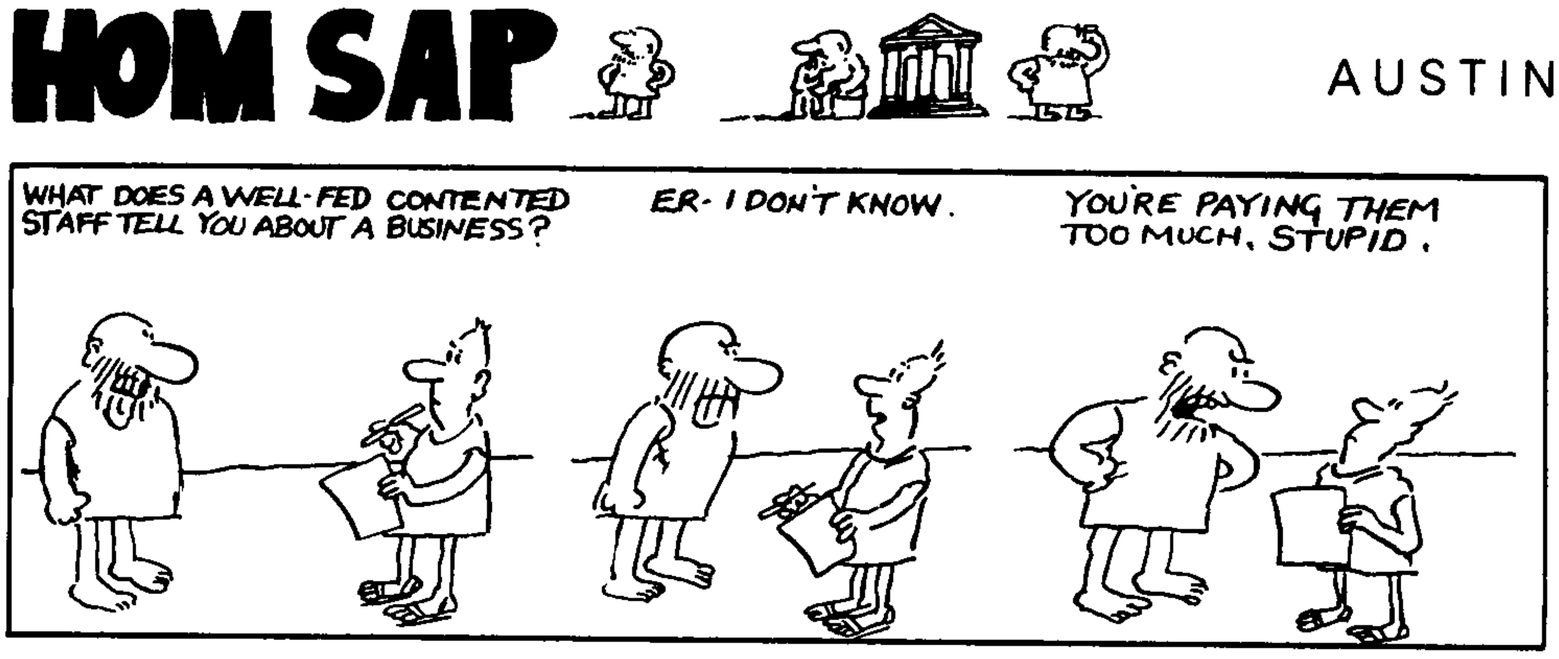
As a result the "povo" — the Joe Bloggses on whose behalf the war of independence against Ian Smith was fought — are saying that Smith might have been a racist bastard "but at least with him we had enough food to eat".

Not that we can accuse Mugabe and his boys of being doctrinaire. Despite their Maoist background, they would get on well with Louis XIV or even Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko — "L'etat, c'est moi." Add corruption to state control and the results have been disastrous.

One sector still making money is farming, dominated by the white minority. So the bosses want their cut. They promise to redistribute the land they seize among black peasants, but past "land reforms" saw an awful lot of government ministers get an awful lot of farms. In any case it seems unlikely that taking a highly mechanised, productive farm and splitting it into hundreds of small plots to give to subsistence farmers is the answer to our economic woes. It would reduce inequality, but only downwards.

Most people, save a few diehard Rhodies, agree land reform is necessary. However the land has to be given to people with the training and resources to earn a living from it. Otherwise they merely become reliant on state handouts which are being cut.

If the First Comrade wants a better press, he should clean up his act rather watch while the army puts the boot in.

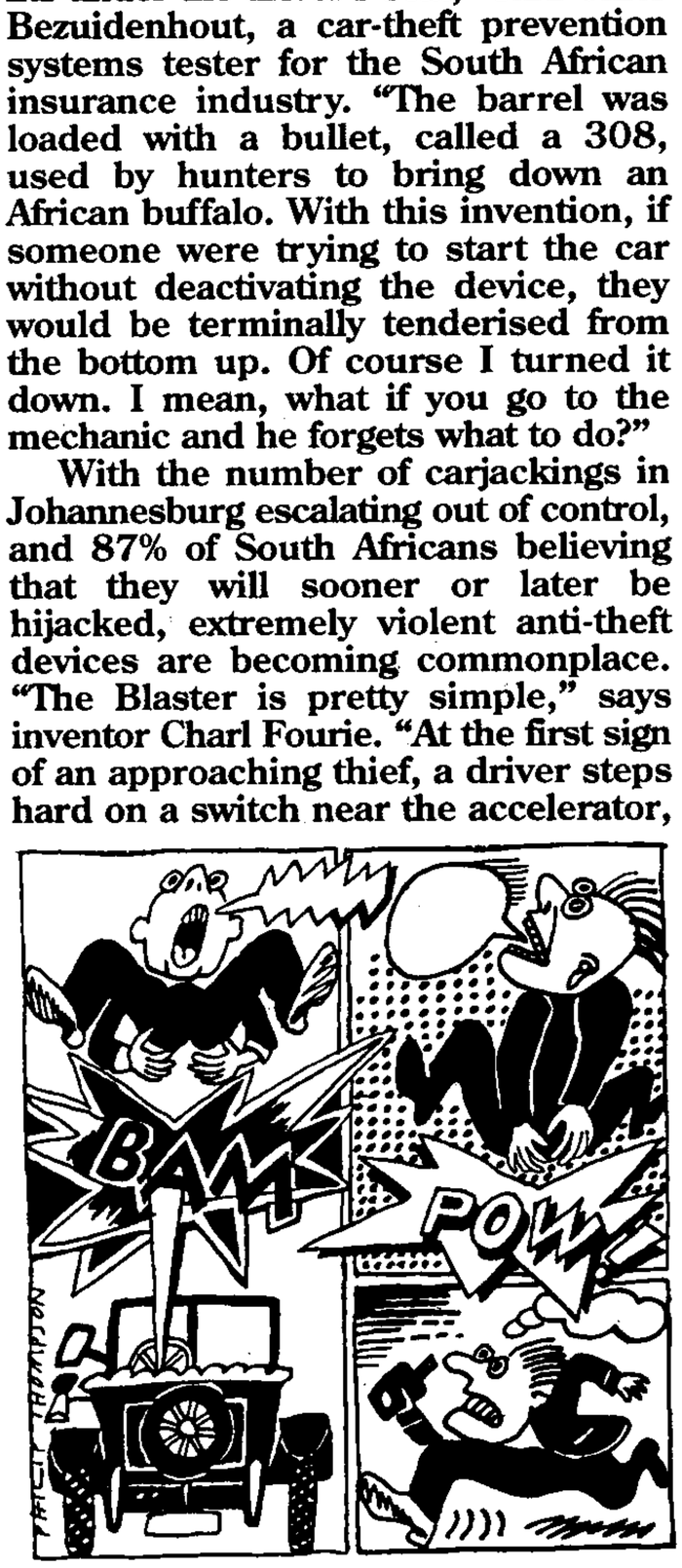

HOM SAP
AUSTIN
WHAT DOES A WELL-FED CONTENTED STAFF TELL YOU ABOUT A BUSINESS?
ER- I DON'T KNOW.
YOU'RE PAYING THEM TOO MUCH, STUPID.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● "One of the sicker devices submitted to me was a gun barrel that fits under the driver's seat," said Chris Bezuidenhout, a car-theft prevention systems tester for the South African insurance industry. "The barrel was loaded with a bullet, called a 308, used by hunters to bring down an African buffalo. With this invention, if someone were trying to start the car without deactivating the device, they would be terminally tenderised from the bottom up. Of course I turned it down. I mean, what if you go to the mechanic and he forgets what to do?"

With the number of carjackings in Johannesburg escalating out of control, and 87% of South Africans believing that they will sooner or later be hijacked, extremely violent anti-theft devices are becoming commonplace. "The Blaster is pretty simple," says inventor Charl Fourie. "At the first sign of an approaching thief, a driver steps hard on a switch near the accelerator,



opening a flow of liquidized gas from a canister in the trunk. The odourless gas exits over a spark via two small nozzles beneath the front doors, and a wall of flame jets forth from both sides of the car. If an attacker is lucky, he will probably blinded. If he isn't, he will be flambéed by seven-foot-high fireballs. I don't think he will be killed, but his hijacking days will be over. Best of all, there is no damage to the paint work of your car."

Other solutions are less hi-tech. "If hijackers get my car, they'll probably go through the glove box, find this brandy bottle, and maybe drink it," says chemical engineer Ulf Gunther. "They won't get very far then, because the brandy is laced with phenol-sulphonphthalein, the strongest laxative known to man. I know it's probably illegal, but so is thieving and carjacking. And I like the thought of the thief's bowels opening as fast as a venus fly trap in reverse." *(Wall Street Journal, 11/1/99. Spotter: Fred Westcott)*

—●—

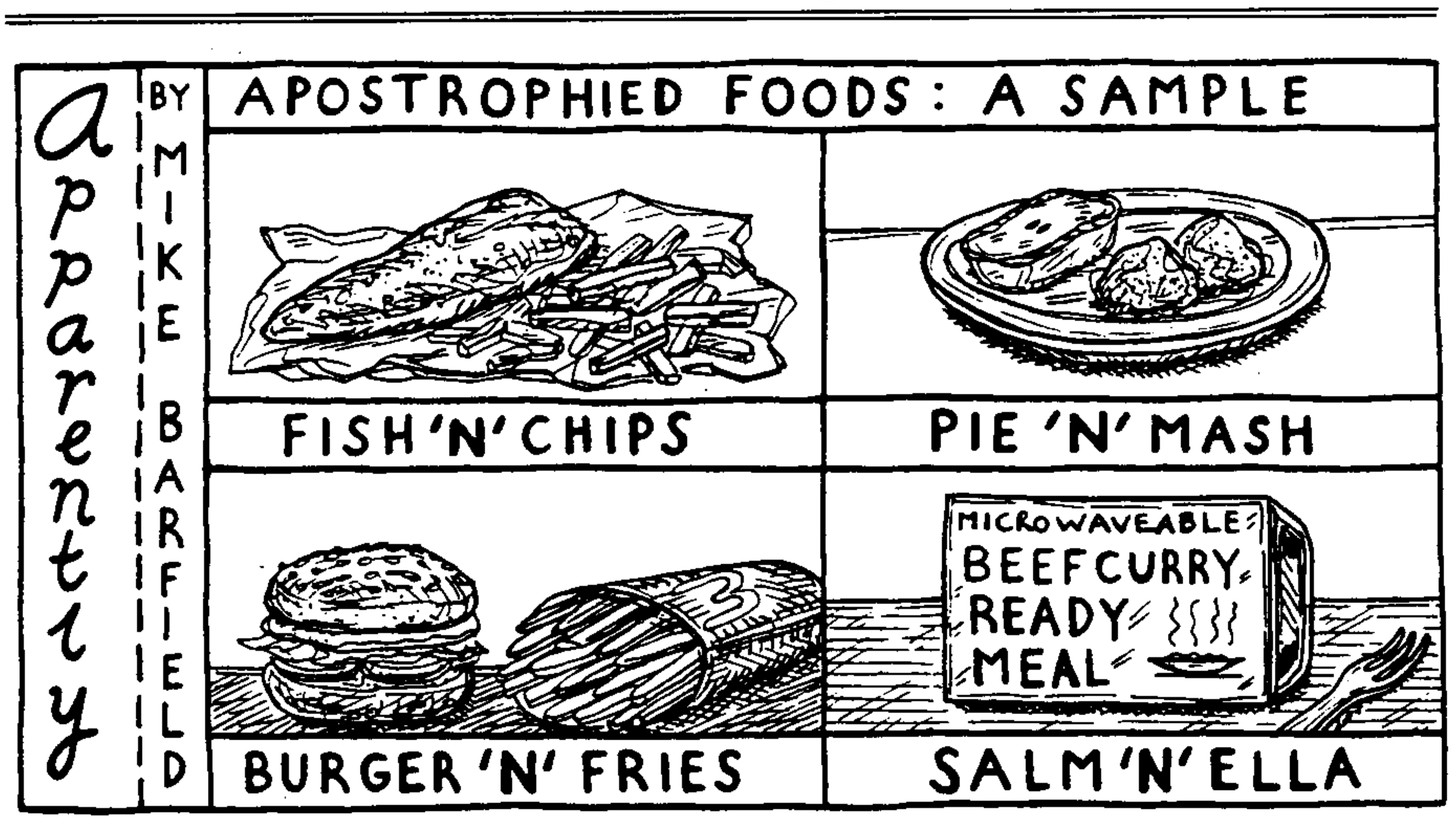
●"Dear Davidapushna, I just wanted to let you know that I have decided not to marry you.

"Your mother called me up and begged me to either put a hyphen in my name or not go through with the marriage. She offered me a large sum of money if I would agree to do either. Numerologically, putting a hyphen in my name would throw my whole life out of balance and ruin our marriage anyway — so I told her I would much rather not marry you than ruin the rest of my life — which would ruin your life — with a hyphenated name. I think the universe has been kind to us both.

"Happy solstice Davidapushna — I hope you can get the deposit back on the laundromat as the wedding venue. Peace on all paths and planes. I am at one with the universe. I can't wait to spend the money on more spiritual enlightenment. Mareeka." *(Letter to Northern Rivers Echo [New South Wales], 12/12/98. Spotter: A. Bennett)*

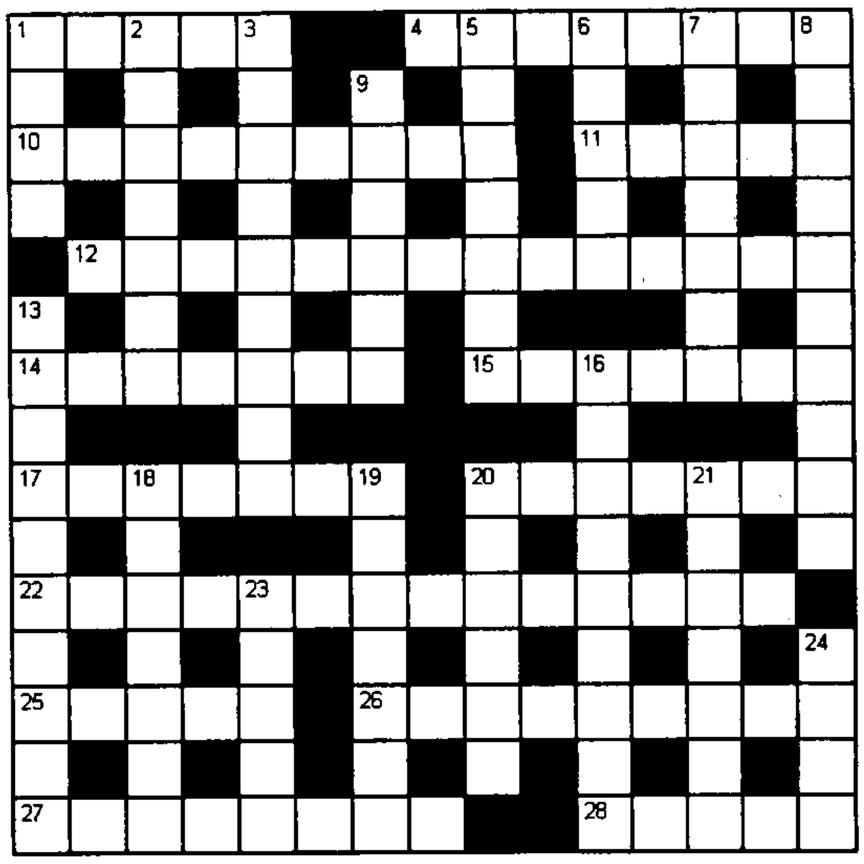
—●—

● *"We believe that Andre Gordon travelled to Newark yesterday morning with the intention of giving William Jones a pistol whipping," Detective Rocco Malanga of the Newark police force told reporters. "He tracked his victim down on Sheppard Avenue and began attacking him, whipping him with a .380-caliber handgun. But he didn't put the safety catch on and, while he was beating Mr Jones, the gun went off. The bullet struck the gunman's groin and passed through his anus. When we found him he was in the process of being mugged, though why anyone would want to steal blood-and-faecal-stained trainers is beyond me. He's being treated for gunshot wounds in the University Hospital, but we've still charged him with aggravated assault, illegal possession of a weapon, and possession of heroin and marijuana. Mr Jones just has some light bruising."* (New Jersey Start Ledger, December 1998. Spotter: S. Nicoll)



EYE CROSSWORD 125

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Dirty Digger's organ represented by 'x' (5)
4 I'd try getting screwed by boxer being a filthy beast (5,3)
10 Leader without one crummy Tory ideal, youth gone (9)
11 Not much of a bang from this queen inside bus one converted (5)
12 Minister who tends to lash out when sailor nestles up to fly and part of leg (4,10)
14 Spin put on Bob's revelations of sexual orientation (7)
15 Like old Nick, like flipping Brown, I note (7)
17 Reveals sex change is about attitude (7)
20 Book, outrageously blue – all talk (7)
22 Scam by US tit Gore – just on second partner's privileges (8,6)
25 Bangs tremendously, suppressing guilt ... (5)
26 ... the British standard formal shag on straw with enlarged head (5,4)
27 Small items, small, small items about right (8)
28 Kevin's got no Brenda out for expenses (5)

DOWN

1 Start to take piss – how affectedly quaint (4)
2 Mandelson's first one going to fashionable do – top of the bill (4,3)
3 Holding a supply of speed – no longer the Lord Chancellor's habit? (9)
5 (see 20 dn.)
6 Ear nibbler gets stony reaction (5)
7 "Brenda up," hinted the old monarch's eldest son internally (7)
8 Mouth "hard drug" – hack staggered (10)
9 Exercises designed to trim corporation excesses (3-3)
13 Blair wants to do away with this humble group of schoolkids (5,5)
16 Gentle ice-breaking, presenting a good image on TV (9)
18 Kingpin wrecked by drink (4,3)
19 Bill's a stony figure accepting impeachment finally (7)
20/5 Caribbean group, one never having had congress, is to acquire leader of senate (6,7)
21 Gives away bishop with elasticated top to drawers (7)
23 Absolute idiot with no name (5)
24 Some gross kisser enjoys some sport (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 26.2.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 124

Winner: PETER STACEY

ACROSS: 1/24 Erectile dysfunction 5 Shades 10 Opium 11 Footnotes 12 Aphrodisiac 13 OBN 14 Isthmus 16 Leftist 18 Camilla 21 Tosspot 23 QPR 24 (see 1 ac.) 26 (see 23 dn.) 27 Nehru 28 Net pay 29 Speakers.

DOWN: 1 Egomaniac 2 Epithet 3 Tempo 4 Lefties 6 Handcuffs 7 Dettori 8 Susan 9 Social 15 Melodrama 17 Tits 'n' bums 19 Marxist 20 Answer 21 Touch up 22 Prithee 23/26 Queen Elizabeth 25 Conga.

MORE TV FAKES EXPOSED

by Our Media Staff
Daytime O'Booze

YET another guest on a TV chat show has been revealed as a fake today. A Mr Tony Blair, 42, has appeared on dozens of chat shows, including, most recently, the Richard and Judy Show on BBC1, giving his views on a number of controversial topics, such as the Glenn Hoddle affair and his wife's bathing costume.

But, it emerged last night that Tony Blair, who claimed to be a Prime Minister, was, in fact, an actor merely pretending to be a political leader for the purposes of the programme.

The researchers defended the booking of Blair, saying "We rang up a reputable agent, Mr Campbell of the Spin Talent Co, and he sent this bloke round. How were we to know he was a fraud?"

Said senior researcher, Ms Tania Daft, 17, "Everything Mr Blair said on the programme had been written for him in advance. He had memorised a script and was word perfect."

FAKE-TIME TV

However, critics who saw the broadcast said that the whole thing was obviously "concocted".

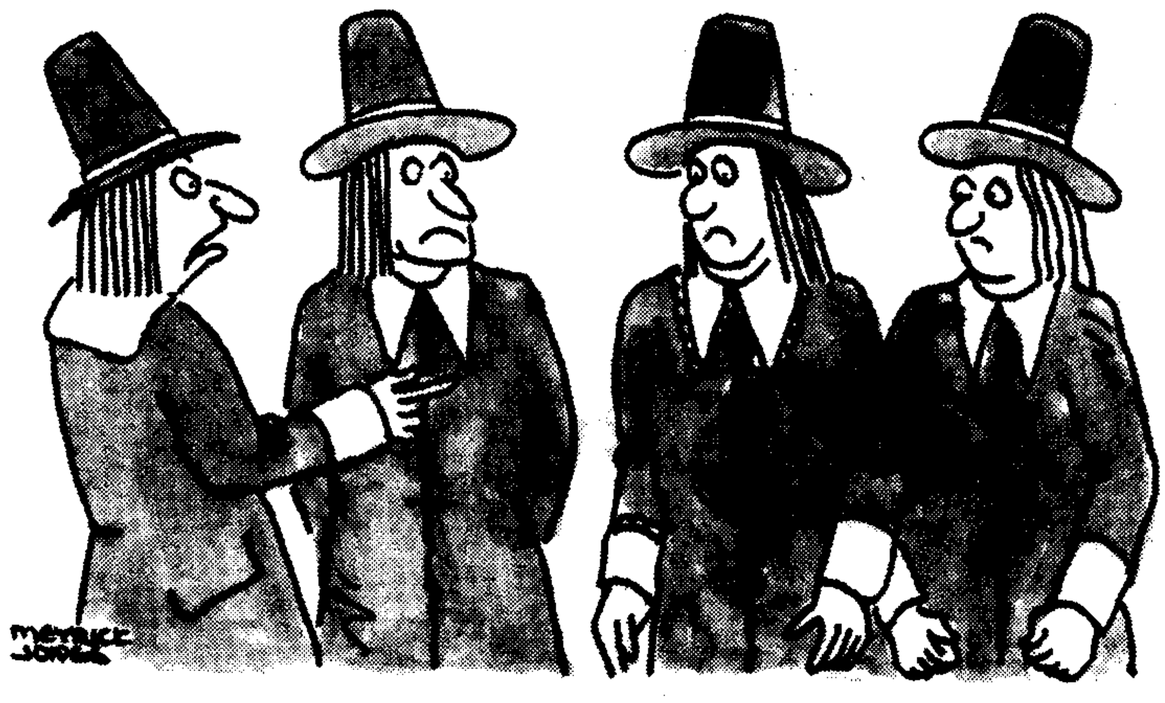
"You could see through Blair at once," said one critic. "He had no statesmanlike qualities and everything he said was clearly a lie."

But the list does not stop at Blair. Sky-TV was duped by eleven hopeless amateurs pretending to be the England Cricket Team.

Even when "the actors" lost by 176 runs, no one at Sky-TV twigged that they were not cricketers at all, but merely "punters having a bit of a laugh after a few beers".

LATE NEWS

The BBC has brought in veteran broadcaster Dame Enid Rantzid to head an inquiry into the scandal. Said Enid, "It is disgraceful for guests to try and make dishonest programmes. That's our job."



"Ponce"

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man Who Backs Frank Bruno To Be The Next England Manager

THE soccer world was rocked to its foundations when Neasden soccer supremo, Ron Knee, 59, offered Dollis Hill the chance of a replay following a controversial goal scored during half-time.

Neasden's new signing from Rumbabwe's Limpopo Rovers, David Bungalo, had run back onto the pitch during the half-time recess and neatly slotted the ball into the net, ignoring the time-honoured convention of not playing football during the break.

Said an ashen-faced Knee, "Technically, we won the game 1-0, but it would be totally against the spirit of the game to let the result stand.

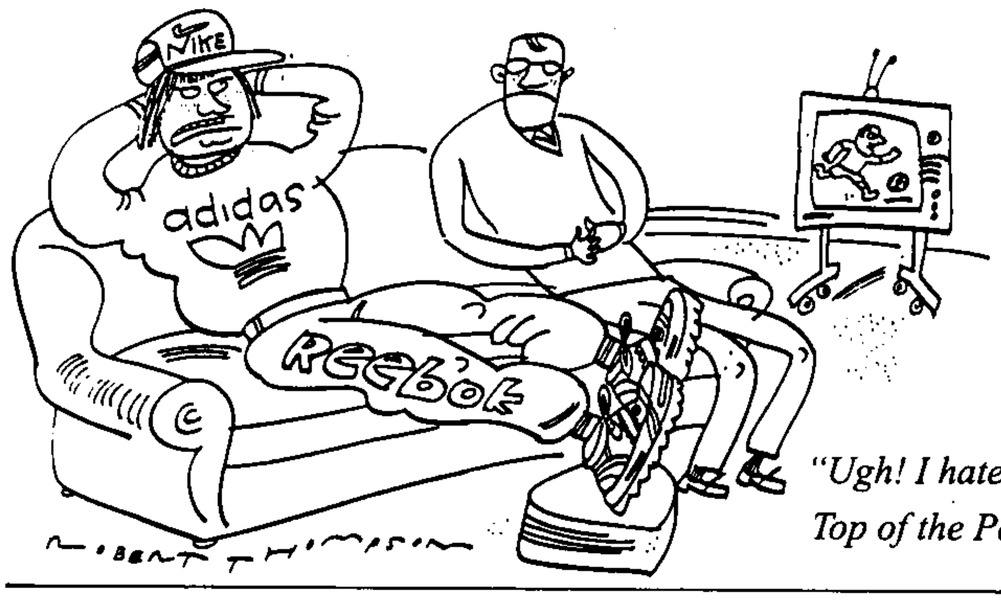
Foul Play

"By having a replay we will be able to uphold the true meaning of what soccer is all about — ie doubling the gate money."

Late Score

Neasden 1
Dollis Hill 0

Match abandoned due to floodlights being stolen by Middle Eastern Betting Syndicate (prop. Alf Ayed).



"Ugh! I hate sport, put Top of the Pops on"

New on Video

Mr HasBean

Hapless William Hasbean can't do anything right. This time he is sent by mistake to America — with hilarious results. As Hasbean wanders around Texas and New York no one has any idea who he is! Don't miss the side-splitting scene where he meets George Bush Junior and nothing happens!

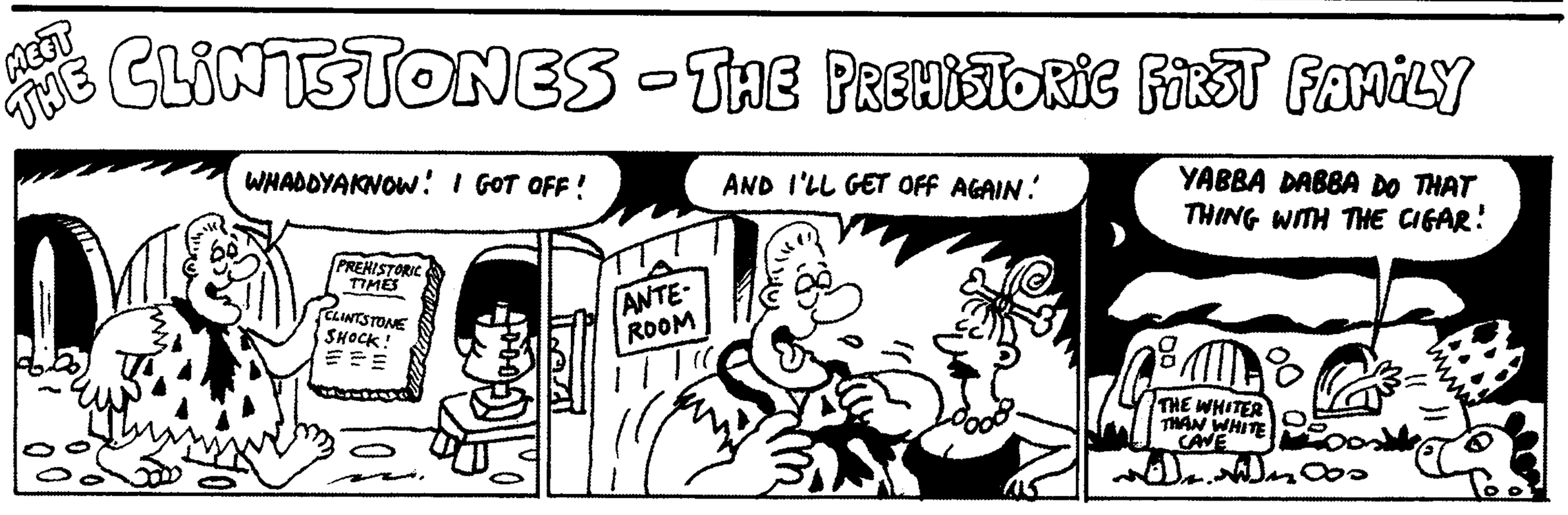
Rating: 32 points behind Tony Blair
Verdict: Z-z-z-z-z-z-z

Barnard, who turned down a move to Southampton in midwee, was inspirational, the tormentor-

Sport First

Jansen Randall's classic header gave **Kettering Genetals** the lead just before half-time.

Evening Telegraph


MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY
WHADDYAKNOW! I GOT OFF!
PREHISTORIC TIMES
CLINTSTONE SHOCK!
AND I'LL GET OFF AGAIN!
ANTE-ROOM
YABBA DABBA DO THAT THING WITH THE CIGAR!
THE WHITER THAN WHITE CAVE

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Once again, Lent is upon us. And I hope you all enjoyed Mr Brown's "genetically modified" pancakes at the church hall! I certainly did!

But Lent is really a time to concentrate our thoughts on the things that really matter! It's a time when we try to empty our lives of trivia!

Not an easy thing to do these days, when we are surrounded by the outpourings of the media and their obsession with mindless chat shows, pop stars, football — and TV soap operas!

But we must do better than that! That is why earlier this week I took the opportunity to appear on our local radio station, Albion FM, and put across some serious points to all the listeners to the popular Johnny Jackson "Coffee Break Show".

Mr Campbell, the editor of this newsletter, kindly suggested that instead of me rambling on, we should just publish a transcript of my interview (unedited!) for those parishioners who may have missed it.

JJ: *Hi, Vicar, great to have you back! What a great track there from Pink Floyd!*

TB: *Too right, JJ, I've got the album and I was playing it only the other day!*

JJ: *Now, we promised to talk about the big issues on this prog. So, let's kick off with the really big one. What do we think about Glenn Hoddle? Our phone-in shows that people think he should go.*

TB: *Do they? Well, in that case, I think he should go too! Assuming he said those things, which I am sure he did!*

JJ: *We can't have people believing in all that religious clap-trap in this day and age, can we?*

TB: *Yeah, look, I mean it's the 21st Century, isn't it, JJ?*

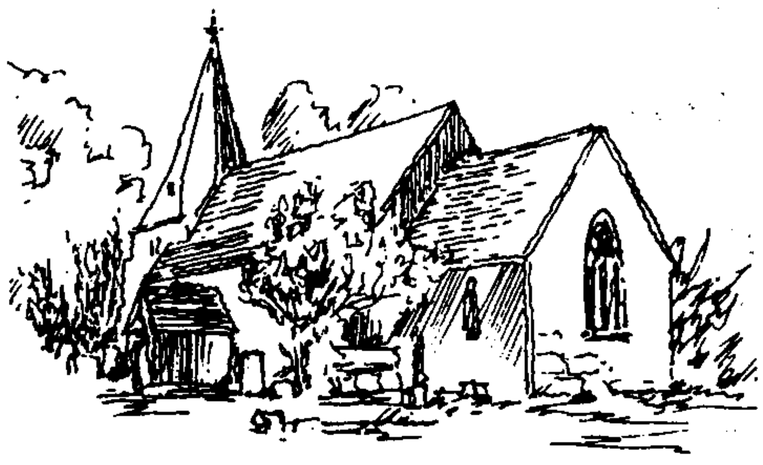
JJ: *Stay with us, Vicar, we're just going to take a short break for today's recipe from Marge Watkins, St Albion's Microwave Gourmet!*

(Recipe omitted. A.C.)

TB: *Mmm. I fancy a bit of that! Sounds delicious! Salmon and broccoli quiche has always been my favourite! And Cherie's too!*

JJ: *That's funny! Last time you were on, you said your favourite was tripe and onions.*

TB: *Ha ha ha!*



JJ: *But, seriously, we've had a lot of really sad news this week. It's been death and gloom all round, hasn't it?*

TB: *Sure. When a really great man passes on, someone who's been loved by millions, then we all feel a personal sense of loss.*

JJ: *You knew the King personally, I believe?*

TB: *No, I meant Alf Roberts from the Street.*

JJ: *He died in real life as well, you know.*

TB: *Did he? Well, that's doubly sad! I am sure all your listeners would like to join me in a moment's prayer.*

JJ: *That's a great idea, Vicar. And while we're all praying, let's listen to something from Boyzone.*

(Track omitted. A.C.)

I think you'll all agree that my appearance on JJ's Show helped to put Lent into perspective, and gave all of you something serious to think about during the 40 days and nights before we have a chance to get at one of those delicious genetically modified chocolate Easter eggs from our friend Mr Sainsbury's shop!

Yours,

Tony

ST ALBION'S HONOURED IN POLL!

A recent opinion poll asked people living in our area which individual in the world today they most looked up to as a spiritual and moral leader. The results were as follows:

1. *Rev. A.R.P. Blair, Vicar of St Albion's*
2. *His Holiness The Dalai Lama*
3. *His Holiness The Pope*
4. *The Late Mother Teresa*
5. *The Late Diana, Princess of Wales*
6. *Nelson Mandela*
7. *Glenn Hoddle*
8. *Mystic Meg*
9. *Trevor McDonald*
10. *H.M. The Queen*

TB writes: This makes me feel very humble and proud! It is a tribute to everyone at St Albion's that they have chosen the most widely respected spiritual leader in the world to be their vicar!"

Advertisement

"Support my campaign to be chosen as Lord Mayor of London in this year's St Albion's Pantomime," says Mr Livingstone (Proprietor: Newts R Us, the Aquatic Pet Centre, High Street).

"I have nothing against the Vicar, whom I have admired since yesterday. If I were chosen to play the part of Lord Mayor, I would play the role straight, and not use it as a platform to make jokes about the Vicar. Honest I wouldn't!

All donations are welcome. Please send cheques to: "Red Ken Support Fund", 29 Acacia

(The Editor reserves the right to cut all advertisements for reasons of space. A.C.)

✢ Lenten Round Up ✢

We asked some of our better-known parishioners to say what they are giving up for Lent.

✢ ***Mr Mandelson:*** *"I shall be giving up my job and my house. In a sense, I am giving up for Lent what I have been lent!"*

(TB writes: He may have lost his house, but it is good to see that Peter hasn't lost his sense of humour! You won't be long in "the wilderness", Peter, I'm sure!)

✢ ***Mr Lairg:*** *"I am giving up wearing silly old-fashioned clothes in church."*

(TB: Quite right, Derry. Let's give up the old-fashioned ideas with them!)

✢ ***Mr Cunningham:*** *"I am giving up travelling first-class on parish business. In future, I will only be using the Diamond Executive Club Class."*

(TB: That's a big sacrifice, Jack! Perhaps our friend Gordon could follow your example!)

✢ ***Mr Adams:*** *"I am giving up nothing. Is that clear?"*

(TB: I am sure Gerry doesn't mean this literally!)

✢ ***Mrs Mowlam:*** *"I am giving up."*

(TB: I think we all have that feeling sometimes, Mo. But, remember, when things look really black, I'm always here to help sort them out!)

!!CONGRATULATIONS!!

Our happy thoughts go out to my old friend William Jefferson Clinton of the Church of the Seven Day Fornicators. His flock have decided not to defrock him after all and have found that he was innocent of everything — even the adultery and the lying which he has confessed to! Good for Bill, this proves my instincts about people are always right! T.B.

Thought for the Day

(chosen by Mr Byers)

"Blessed are the wealthmakers for they shall make wealth"

(Gospel according to St. Margaret)

Why I Have Booked My Ticket On The Titanic

A Daily Telegraph World Exclusive

by **Edward Enfield** (father of TV's Harry)

I HAVE made up my mind. Nothing can stop me now. I am going to book my passage on this wonderful new ship the Titanic, under its excellent new skipper Captain William Hague.

He strikes me as the perfect man to guide us safely across the Atlantic, avoiding all icebergs which might float into our path and thus sink the ship with huge loss of life.

I look forward to the voyage enormously.

© Harry's Dad Trash 1912

Desert Island Discs

with TV's Sue Lawley

No. 94. Beethoven's Ode To Joy

SUE LEGGY writes: This tune is a big favourite with many of my castaways. It was written by the famous composer Beethoven, with words by the poet Göethe, who was the Andrew Lloyd-Webber of his time.

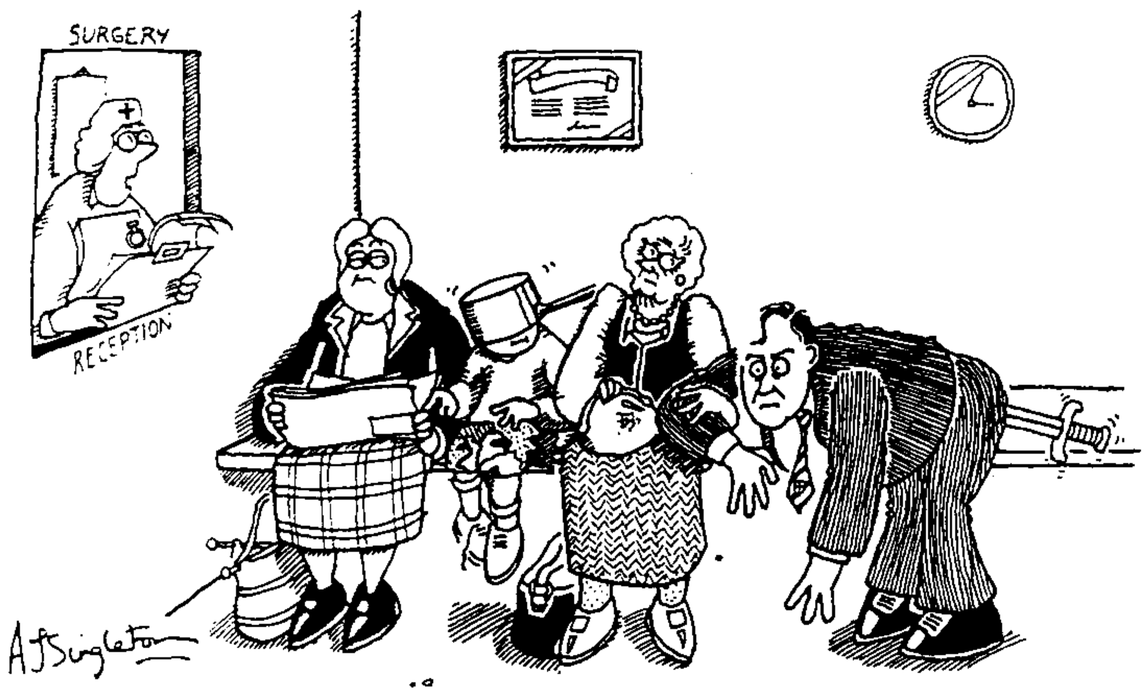
Posh Spice: I love classical music, and this is one of my agent's favourites. I always think of the European Cup which had it as the theme tune. Or was that the World Cup?

Damien Hirst: I first heard it when it was an advert for the Fujitsu Lagonda. Mega-brilliant.

Sir Edward Heath: I once conducted this famous piece in front of 400 million Chinese, who all said afterwards that it was the finest performance they had ever heard.

Taken from Your 100 Desert Island Top Tunes *by Sue Leggy, BBC Worldwide Money Publications, £29.99*

Tomorrow: Alexander Chancellor writes about his teeth, Sarah Sands has her hair cut, Tom Utley decides to carry on smoking and Editor Charles Moore accuses the Times of dumbing down.



"Sword of Truth...?"

Only poets can save us from millennium buggery

Times of India

Body found on boat seized by bailiffs and due to be auctioned

Isle of Wight County Press

Letters to the Editor

A King Remembered

SIR — May I be allowed to add a personal reminiscence of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan or, as some of us remember him, 32067 Officer Cadet King Hussein? During the Sandhurst Passing Out Parade in 1923, I was standing next to the late King when we were inspected by a particularly ferocious Regimental Sergeant-Major, RSM Hastings (known affectionately to generations of "Sandies" simply as "Hitler"). Spotting the King's elaborate headgear, RSM Hastings shouted "Officer Cadet King Hussein, Sir! Take that tea-towel off your head, Your Majesty, Sir, and clean your dirty Arab boots with it, Sir!"

There was much hilarity in the mess that night, in which His Majesty was the first to join.

Field Marshall HORACE FARQUHARSON-GUSSETT,
The Old Square, Bashing, Hants.

SIR — As someone who knew the Kingdom of Jordan in the happy days when it was the British Protectorate of Transjordanoland, may I add to the anecdotes which have appeared in your columns about the late King Hussein. Although I never knew him personally, I was privileged on one occasion to be admitted to the private tent of his great-grand-uncle, the late Prince Ibadullah. I handed him a letter of introduction personally signed by the British High Commissioner in Jerusalem Sir Roderick Massingberd. The Prince did me the honour of reading the letter, before asking me to leave the tent since he had some pressing business to attend to. This old-world courtesy was clearly inherited by subsequent scions of the family!

GEORGE ICHABOD,
former sales representative for the Anglo-Jordanian Electric Fire Co. (liquidated 1925).

SIR — A little known fact about the late King of Jordan was his enthusiasm for amateur radio. As a fellow "radio ham", I once inadvertently enjoyed the privilege of having a conversation with him over the airwaves. "Hello," I said, "this is Poached Egg from Hemel Hempstead calling." "Hullo, Poached Egg," I heard a beautifully-spoken voice reply. "This is His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan." "I'm very sorry, Your Majesty," I responded, "I was trying to contact Burnt Toast in the Solomon Islands." "Jolly good luck, old boy," was His Majesty's rejoinder, delivered with all the charm and courtesy we associate with that great Old Harrovian.

Yours ever,
poachedegg@newport.com.uk

PRODUCT RECALL

Nopol

BlairCo, the manufacturers of **Nopol**, are recalling the entire production run of this product — a well-known soothing syrup swallowed by millions of voters over the past two years, and designed to keep them in a state of gentle sleepiness. Tests have now shown that the drug nopolicies-whatsoever (Nopol) is entirely ineffective, and may lead to nausea, irritation and depression.

Customers are advised that Nopol cannot in any circumstances be returned, and that no claims for compensation will be considered.

Signed: Frank Dobson, Chief Medical Advisor to BlairCo.

Nursery Times

Prince Charming Denies Nazi Past

by Our Royal Correspondent Humpty Dumpster

PRINCE Ernst August von Charming was today embroiled in a bitter row over his ancestors' behaviour during the last war.

Prince Charming hit the headlines recently when he married the Princess Snow White after finding her comatose under a glass in a bar in Monaco.

The Prince yesterday rejected claims that his grandfather, Prince Adolph Himmler von Charming of Lebensraum, and his father OberGruppenFührer Hermann Blitzkrieg von Charming were in some way connected with the Nazis.

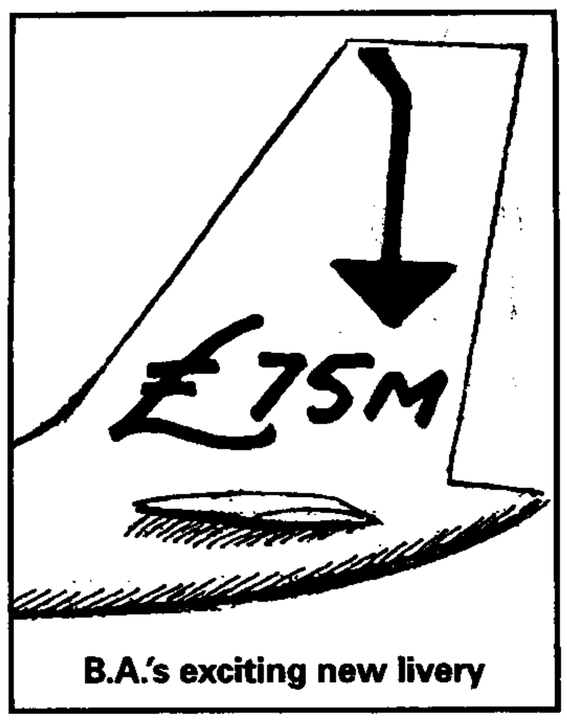
Said Prince Charming, "These allegations suggesting my family are fascists are a disgrace and anyone who repeats them will be taken outside and shot."

Writzkrieg

Lawyers acting for the Prince (Messrs Achtung, Schnell and Raus) immediately issued a clarification. They said: "When the Prince used the words 'taken out and shot' he was quoting himself out of context and what he really meant was 'they will be served with a writ and sued to death'."

Later the Prince appeared on the balcony of the Schloss Adler, the family seat (formerly the home of a wealthy merchant Mr Schumaker, supplier of elf-made shoes to the gentry) to tell waiting reporters:

"It was all once upon a time, a long, long time ago in a faraway land. Stop trying to destroy this fairytale. We want to live happily ever after. The End."



B.A.'s exciting new livery

POETRY CORNER

Lines To Mark The Engagement Of His Royal Highness The Prince Edward and Miss Sophie Rhys-Jones

by the proposed new 'Rap' Poet Laureate

Yo' mutha is the queen
That everybody's seen
When she git down on the air
To swear
Tha parla-ment in.

An wavin' from da balcony
Give tha people harmony
Like when tha Princess Di
In da Dodi car crash die
Came to give da people succour.

Now yo' ain't no ****sucker
Cos yo' bring another bride
To tha Royal Fam'ly side
And yo' stake yo' reputation
On you own TV station.

Now yo' got ta make it
Got to take it
Yo' can't fake it
Got tha marital itch
With that Sophie bitch.

No disrespec' meant
Cos she is yo' intended
And on yo' wedding night
Everythin' gonna be all right
S'long as that princess
give delight
And don't take fright
So yo' treat her right.

God bless yo'
Both an' keep yo'.

Snoop Corgi Dogg (O.M.),
Rapper Laureate

LATE NEWS

TINKY-WINKY OUTED

THE MUCH-loved TV entertainer, Mr Ned Tinky-Winky, has been declared "an obvious homosexual" by American religious groups.

The outing which has surprised no one is backed up by claims that Tinky-Winky's show "Loose Ends" constantly features camp guests with an unhealthy interest in musicals.

Also, the eagle-eyed fundamentalists have pointed to tell-tale signs in Tinky's autobiography, such as his admission to being gay and enjoying sexual liaisons with rough trade. *(Rutters)*

Evening Low Standard

Julie Bullshit

GWYNETH PALTROW? Thyneth Paltrow I call her because she's disgustingly thin. And, like all thin women, she must be useless in bed. Men *really* hate thin women, and they much prefer big fat ones. That's the truth of it. Think of the really great sex symbols — Liz Taylor, Sophia Loren, Ava Gardner, Julie Burchill. They have all been enormously fat women who have written best-selling novels and *(cont. p. 94)*

"The school run's a bind, but it really isn't safe to let them walk with all this traffic on the road."

THAT BLAIR TOUGH TV INTERVIEW IN FULL

Matthew Corbett *(for it is he)*: Sooty's got a question for you, Mr Blair, haven't you, Sooty?

(Sooty whispers in the Prime Minister's ear)

Blair: I'm glad you asked me that Sooty and, yes, I *am* doing a wonderful job running the country.

(Sooty whispers again in Blair's ear)

Blair: What's that Sooty?

William Hague is a laughable creep? You can't expect me to comment on that. Though you are entitled to your opinion. Ha ha ha!

Corbett: Oh no! Sooty's got his water pistol out.

Blair: Great! Let's export it to Sierra Leone.

(Enter Alastair Campbell)

Campbell: I think we'll edit that bit out.

ENDS

The New National Hard Core Curriculum

Devised by H.M. Chief Inspector For Schools MR CHRISTOPHER WOODLOUSE

1. Latin

Read the following passage carefully: "Inspector amavit puellam. Puella amavit inspectorem. Inspector et puella elopaverunt. Scandalum magnatum sequitur."

Do you think a) the inspector should resign? b) the inspector should deny the allegations? c) the prime minister should intervene on the Richard and Judy Show to call for him not to resign?

2. English Literature (Set text: *Lolita*)

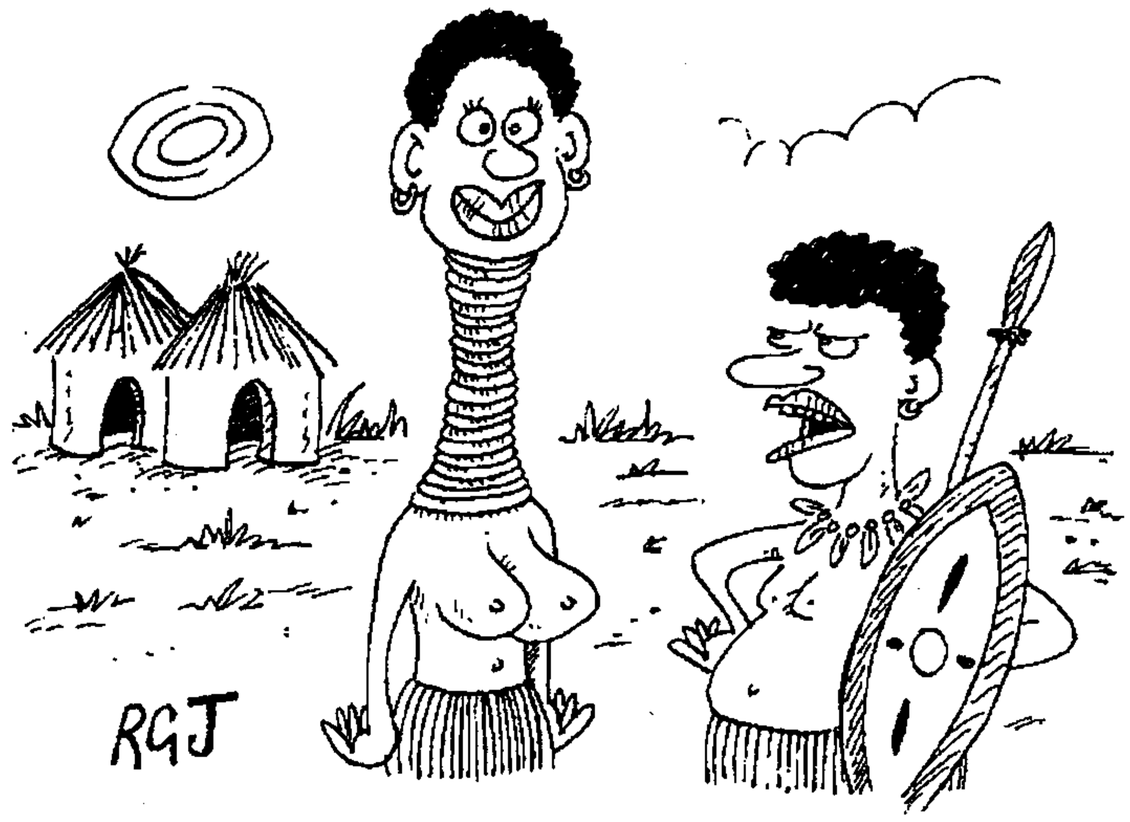
In what way was it "educative" for the young sixth-form student Lolita to enjoy a relationship with her teacher Dr Humbert Woodhead? Think carefully before giving the wrong answer to this trick question.

3. Ancient History

"It was all a long time ago and I can't see what all the fuss is about."

Was this said by a) Alexander the Great; b) Plutarch; c) Dr Chris Woodhead?

(That's enough Corrh! Curriculum. Ed.)



"Frankly I think you're taking this whole 'Gwyneth Paltrow Look' too far"

The Eye's Exciting New Columnist!!

POLLY FILLER

AS if looking after one animal isn't hard enough work (ie, the useless Simon, who is in a mood because Charlie put a jam sandwich in the video machine, thus wiping out his treasured Canadian Ice Hockey Highlights recording), now the toddler has decided he wants a cat.

I told him we're not having a cat because I'm allergic enough to dustmites without inviting a walking asthma attack into the house.

I tried to fob Charlie off with a goldfish, but the wretched thing died whilst we were all in Paris – apparently they need feeding, which the hopeless girl in the petshop might have mentioned if she hadn't been too busy serving people in the queue in front of me.

Anyway, Simon (temporarily roused from his beery slumber) then pitched in with the sort of thoughtless suggestion that men typically make – ie. one that creates more work for women.

"Let's get a dog," says Stupid. "Great," says Charlie. "And who is going to end up walking it at six o'clock every morning?" I asked, knowing the answer full well.

"The Au-Pair!" we all shouted in unison. The mutt arrives on Monday.

© *All newspapers*

NEWS IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA WELCOMES BACK MANDELASON

THE South African people yesterday failed to welcome into their arms the now legendary President Mandelason, following his many tortuous weeks spent languishing in the Notting Hill Wilderness.

A spokesman for Mandelason explained: "This is truly a great day for South Africa — Mr Mandelason has suffered greatly in solitary over the last two months or so, but now he is well and truly out, and ready to go back to what he does best — flying around the world at other people's expense and bossing everyone about." *(Reuters)*

"Hello — can I interest you in central heating?"

COOK LASHES MPs OVER ARMS REPORT

by Our Political Staff **Sir Sandline Gall**

MR ROBIN Cook last night hit out at the committee of MPs who had dared to produce a report on the Foreign Office's "cocking-up" of the Sierra Leone affair.

His beard red with fury, the Foreign Secretary said, "It is not the job of MPs to criticise the government. It is their job to praise Tony and myself for the wonderful job that we are doing."

AFRICAN QUEENIE

"How dare these jumped-up little nobodies," said Mr Cook, "attack the integrity of civil servants in the Foreign Office who are in no position to defend themselves.

"The Conservative Party are trying to make out this is a repeat of the Iraqgate affair, when I attacked the Foreign Office for cocking it up and slammed the useless civil servants for their total incompetence.

WHOSE SANDLINE IS IT ANYWAY?

"But there is no comparison between these two episodes, because of one glaringly obvious difference. In the first case, I was in opposition. But this time I am in government."

Mr Blair was quick to rush to his Foreign Secretary's defence in an exclusive interview to ITV's *Well Wicked Kids* children's breakfast show (Southern Region).

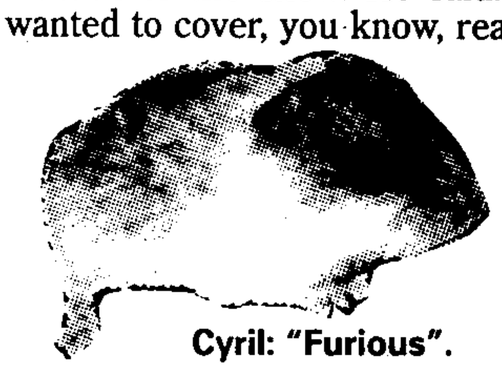
"Robin Cook," said the prime minister, "has my full support. It is typical that the media should focus on complete trivia like wars in Africa and Government incompetence, when they should be focussing on real issues like the tragic death of the Street's Alf Roberts and the happy return of Lee Dixon to the England squad after an absence of five years."

BLUE PETER STAR QUITS

by Our Showbiz Staff
John and Bart Simpson

THE popular BBC children's programme was stunned yesterday by the surprise departure of Cyril the Blue Peter Hamster who sensationally left the show last night.

Cyril, 2½, gave a press conference where he attacked BBC management for their attitude to the show. He said: "I wanted to cover, you know, really important issues like drugs and divorce and teenage pregnancy and stuff, but all they wanted was for me to run around my wheel."



Cyril: "Furious".

RODENT RAGE

Said Cyril, "They're living in the past – today's kids want to see hamsters going clubbing and meeting popstars, not just eating corn husks and sleeping a lot. I mean, what's cool and nineties about that?"

Cyril's agent confirmed that the hamster was exploring other career possibilities, including total obscurity and cat food.

Blue Peter is 40, and good, so leave it alone.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam

So. Farewell
Then
The Oxford University
Press Poetry
List.

I was never
On it
Myself.

So I am
Sad to
Hear

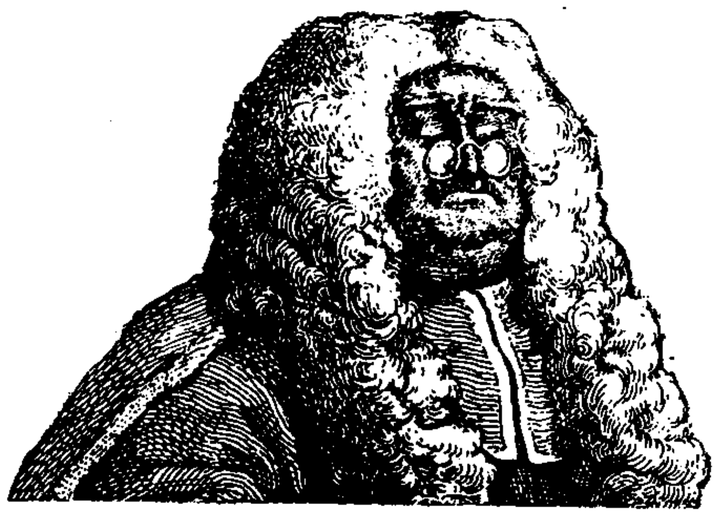
That dozens
Of poets
Have been
Sacked.

Now no
One will
Read their
Poems.

Not that
Anyone did
Anyway.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

Thribb's new collection of poetry *The Unwanted Leaf* will be published in the spring by the University of Neasden Press (formerly Brent Cross Polytechnic Publications), £79.77.



IN THE COURTS

Regina v. Alejed Massmurdera
Before Mr Justice Cocklecarrot
Day 94.

Judge Cocklecarrot: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. You have had a very interesting lecture relating to certain alleged events many years ago, for which the late Herr Hitler may or may not have been responsible. That is for your to decide when the moment comes, in several years' time. You have also heard evidence as to how the alleged accused, Mr Massmurdera, was for 47 years employed as a ticket collector on the Southern Region of British Rail, although it is not alleged that during that time he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent passengers. Though, again, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, that is a matter for you and you alone to decide.

Sir Strange Nutter QC *(for the Crown)*: M'Lud, I submit this may be an opportune moment for the jury to see certain slides of the alleged scene of the alleged crime taken at the alleged time.

(The Court was then shown several indistinct black-and-white slides, possibly of trees somewhere in Belarus)

Judge Cocklecarrot: I am obliged to you, Sir Strange. Though I must confess that my dear wife takes rather better photographs on our annual holiday in Torquay.

(Sycophantic laughter from barristers)

The Accused: I am innocent. Your season ticket is out of date. You should be shot for this.

Sir Hartley Redface QC *(for the accused)*: You must excuse my client, M'Lud. He is very old.

Cocklecarrot: Nonsense, Sir Hartley. Compared to some of us in this courtroom, he is a young man in his prime.

(More sycophantic laughter from barristers)

Sir Strange: My Lord, in order to make these proceedings even lengthier, would it not be a good idea for us all to adjourn to Belarus, wheresoever that may be, in order that we can see for ourselves whatever it is that may be seen.

Judge Cocklecarrot: Won't it be awfully cold?

Sir Strange: So it may be, My Lord. But may I suggest that all of us should purchase, prior to our long and hazardous journey, a furry hat of the type allegedly worn by Mr Massmurdera in some of the photographs taken in 1942 which you may have seen earlier if you were awake.

Usher *(Mrs Ethel Prunegrove, for it is she)*: Can I come too, Your Honour? I could pour you out a nice glass of water, if you were feeling thirsty.

Cocklecarrot: Perhaps in those parts it should be vodka, Mrs Prunegrove! *(Even more sycophantic laughter from barristers)* I hereby agree to the adjournment and I will see you all in the Departure Lounge at Heathrow Airport at 1430 hrs tomorrow afternoon.

(The case continues on flight BA94 to Minsk, and thereafter by BELATOURS coach to the scene of the alleged crime)

Radio 4 **Today:** Highlights

Sue McGhastly *(for it is she)*: and the really exciting news this morning is that there has been a terrible avalanche in France, which has killed a lot of people. Our reporter Sarah Hackette is in Chamonix. Sarah, as you look up the mountain, can you describe the scene?

Hackette: Well, it's snowing rather hard, so I can't see very...

McGhastly: You mean you can't see any limbs poking out of the snow?

Hackette: Well, no, I can't...

McGhastly: But surely you can see some arms or legs or bits of body half-buried in the killer drifts, that sort of thing?

Hackette: ...er, well, not really...

McGhastly: But wasn't there a story of some cable car crashing down into the path of the avalanche and exploding like a fireball, like in a film?

Hackette: Well, I wouldn't know because I've only just got here...

McGhoul: I'm afraid we seem to have lost Sarah there, but we'll return to her later when she's come up with something a bit juicier. And now, it's time for Thought For The Day with the Bishop of Neasden.

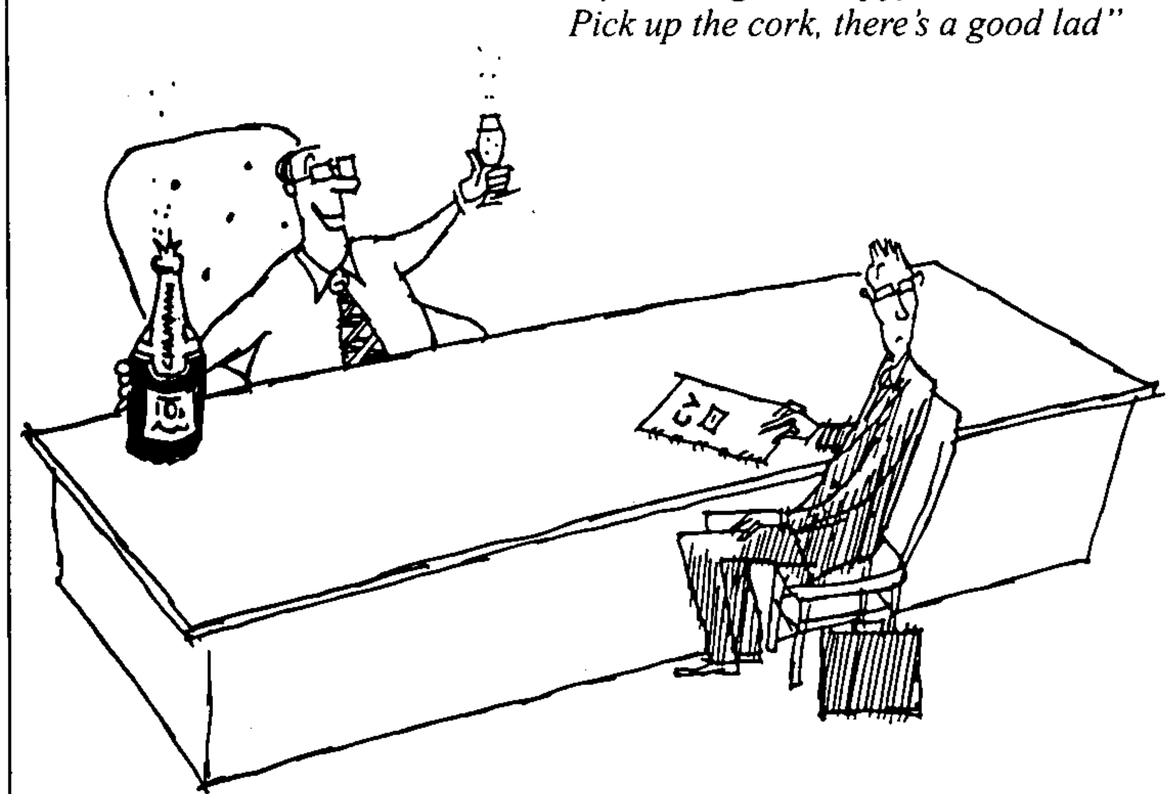
Bishop: Well, Sue, we're all thinking at this time about the terrible news of this avalanche. But, you know, the death of King Hussein, in the same week that genetically modified crops are uppermost in all our minds, makes us realise that, in a very real sense *(cont. 94Khz)*

3 Hospices SupaLott Prizewinners – Draw 34 (December 25, 1998)

£1,000: Mr S Luckie, Aylesbury

Bucks Free Press

"To your long and happy career with us! Pick up the cork, there's a good lad"



TV Pick

Sex And The City (Channel 4)

A group of Channel 4 shareholders sit around discussing why they want more sex on the channel. They just can't get enough, and eagerly join in the "Rating Game". A shockingly cynical view of Nineties men and women.

A History of Alternative Comedy (Channel 4)

Man gets up on stage of seedy club and swears and rants about "the system"; man gets own TV show and rants about "the system", but doesn't swear otherwise he won't work again; man goes into studio and does voice-over for large Building Society; man accepts invitation to Downing Street soirée and entertains everyone with sanitised routine about "the old system" which has nothing in common with his new-found friends' system which is altogether fairer, and not worth getting up on stage and swearing about.

Vanessa (BBC1)

This week Vanessa looks at a new problem: "Women who are going to get the sack." *(That's enough TV. Ed.)*

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

DIARY

ERICA JONG

Yes, I've always loved words. Long words. Short words. Middle-sized words. Words not exactly short, but still not quite long enough to be called middle-sized. In-betweeny kind of words. No matter. I love them all. As a child, making words slant across the page was like making rain. Hey! I could make rain! The revelation impacted on me like a triple orgasm on a deck-chair. See the flowers bloom under my golden rays! And isn't that a rainbow athwart the pastures? Beneath the arbour of the corn-bush, a young rabbit pleasures an older rabbit with his twirling, tinkling, rabbity tongue. The older rabbit has taught him all she knows of love, and now he is repaying her in full. Fill me! Fill me! Yes, I was the God of all I wrote, and, like God, I was going to change the world.

And so I did. Just two years after I wrote "Fear of Flying," Richard Milhous Nixon resigned from office. 12 years later, with the publication of "Horny as Hell: The Feminist Diary of an 18th Century Lady", Nelson Mandela was released from prison. And almost exactly eight and a half years after I wrote "How To Save Your Own Life", the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. This week, I have a new book out, and, whaddya know, a new Millennium is soon to be announced.

"To be or not to be," wrote the acclaimed playwright William Shakespeare, "That is the question." My thoughts entirely.

A book is a kind of hand-grenade, throwing water into the air like a dove nibbling at scattered seed. My novels set up chain reactions all over the world which, believe me, I can't control. An image comes into your head. You set it down on paper. And the world is never quite the same again. Though I am world-renowned for my powerful and influential brave and sexually-explicit novels, I see myself primarily as a poet, like W.B. Yeats or William Wordsworth, but much more in tune with the needs of the modern woman. Like them, I am obsessed with death, but I also enjoy my purchasing power, brought about through a hugely successful career as a thinker, poet and novelist, translated into over thirty-two languages worldwide and favourably reviewed in many of our leading journals. This poem came to me while shopping. It's called "At Macy's".

Death
Profound. Eternal. Unknown. Arriving at
The end of life like an
Unhurrying penis saying hello
To nipples that will do anything
For his autograph. Is that a settee in
Velveteen-lycra mix over
There? Like death, that I
Must have.

I did not know Diana, Princess of Wales, very intimately. I never met her more than a dozen times. In fact, I met her less than a dozen times. A whole lot less. To be frank, I never met her at all. But fate was to fix the Princess and the Poetess together for all time. My life and hers ran parallel.

The coincidences were uncanny. We were both women, and English was for both of us our first language. We both had christian names that ended in "a", and though her surname wasn't Jong, it was something close, and, like mine, had an "n" near its center. We both had blonde hair, and were adored by many millions of people. Diana had two sons, and I had a daughter. I had written over a dozen highly acclaimed best-sellers that had changed the lives of a generation, and Diana had written nothing. Diana was still a virgin, and I was basically still a virgin, maybe not quite, but hey, who's counting? The same day Diana walked down the aisle in St Paul's, I was sitting in my apartment in Manhattan, watching her on NBC, woman to woman. Our lives were already inextricably intertwined: we were like two sides of the same coin.

The more I learnt about Diana, the more I felt I knew her. Like me, she was a Jewish girl from Brooklyn. Like me, she was crazy about Emily Dickinson and Pablo Neruda, hot for sex in the sun-soaked morning of a Venetian afternoon, three times divorced, a sucker for fellatio with gondoliers and the victim-to-be of a world still suspicious of the woman as artist.

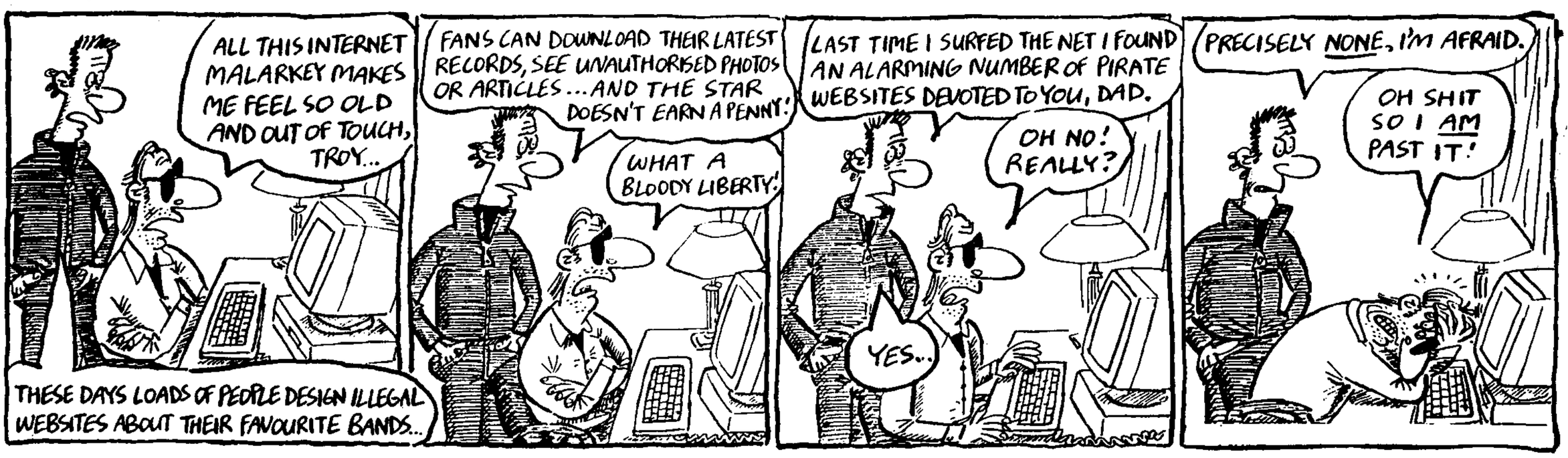
And now Diana is gone and I alone remain, an icon for us both, a woman the media wish to burn as a witch at the stake of their forsaken dreams. I am Oscar Wilde, Dante, Emily Bronte, Sylvia Plath. I am the Delphic Oracle, the paradox eternal. You can't see it? Then maybe – just maybe – you haven't yet confronted the reality of being a woman.

Ah, *Venezia!* (the Italian for Venice). It is like no other place on earth, a city blessed with having been the lustrous, historic setting for one of my most memorable novels. *Venice*! Though it rhymes with tennis, there are few tennis courts there. But it also rhymes with Penice or Penis. Ah, *Penezia*! To me Venice has always been a young man, his chest rippling with muscles, dragging me to his bedchamber, nimbly unbuttoning my *Versace* top, pulling out his manhood and slowly yet urgently entering me again and again and again, like the little man in a Swiss weather predictor on a changeable day, full of bright spells and blustery showers.

Let me paint a picture of Venice in words. Plash, plash. Laughter wafts across the canal. Fragments of conversation float under my open window. Plash, plash, plash. Beneath my silk *blouson*, my nipples sway to the gentle hum and thrust of the *canale*. Only the occasional plash-plash-plash of an oar interrupts the silence. Plash. There it goes again! Plash-plash! And again! The air is aromatic with the scent of coffee. Soon you are transported to a world in which the gentle lapping of your lover's tongue against your breast takes you to a – plash! plash! plash! plash! plash! – hey, is there no end to this infernal plashing?! Quit this plashing NOW! Room SERVICE! Oh, someone shut the fucking window, can't you, this fucking plashing's driving me *maaad*!!

Celeb

LIGGER


ALL THIS INTERNET MALARKEY MAKES ME FEEL SO OLD AND OUT OF TOUCH, TROY...
THESE DAYS LOADS OF PEOPLE DESIGN ILLEGAL WEBSITES ABOUT THEIR FAVOURITE BANDS..
FANS CAN DOWNLOAD THEIR LATEST RECORDS, SEE UNAUTHORISED PHOTOS OR ARTICLES... AND THE STAR DOESN'T EARN A PENNY!
WHAT A BLOODY LIBERTY!
LAST TIME I SURFED THE NET I FOUND AN ALARMING NUMBER OF PIRATE WEBSITES DEVOTED TO YOU, DAD.
OH NO! REALLY?
YES...
PRECISELY NONE, I'M AFRAID.
OH SHIT SO I AM PAST IT!

Literary Review

Mything you already...

SOMETIME in the early 1860s William Makepeace Thackeray observed to one of his younger chums: "I have made my mark, and my money, and said my say, and the world smiles on me, and perhaps were I to die tomorrow the *Times* newspaper would give me just three-quarters of a column of obituary notice."

Well, the celebrity literary death has moved on a tad since then. Providing the circumstances are sexy enough (your wife killed herself many years back, you suffered from a newsworthy disease) blanket coverage is more or less guaranteed.

So it was with Dame Iris Murdoch, who died last week at the ripe age of 79. She had Alzheimer's, so inevitably it was "tragic Iris"; her husband John Bayley's affecting memoir was mercilessly pillaged in the quest for intimate copy; and there occurred the unutterably hilarious spectacle of a *Sun* leader advising its readers that "Britain still treasures its writers. And she was one of our finest" — I don't suppose Iris had rated a single mention in the *Sun* in the 30 years that she and it had coexisted. Perhaps the editor thought she was Rupert's mother.

Among the reams of hastily assembled comment (she died at 4pm on a Monday, which caught one or two papers on the hop — the *Independent* didn't get its obit in until Wednesday) and appreciation, several themes predominated. One was the hugely unilluminating personal appearance. Fay Weldon (*Express*) remembered a writers' jolly to Israel back in the '70s ("A kind of light shone through her" Fay poetically concluded. "She had a deep seriousness, yet she was great fun.") D.J. Taylor (*Scotsman*) recalled her complaining about Arthur Scargill at a party. Erica Wagner (*Times*) disclosed the fantastically interesting snippet that "after I met her for the first time last year at a party, she shook my hand, greeted me warmly, her face interested and open even though, in the next moment, I knew she would have no recollection of who I was."

Other memorialists combined their walk-on roles with attempts to claim the deceased for some not entirely obvious constituency. Thus Niall Macmonagle in the *Irish Times*, who had enjoyed a meal of "delicious cold sausage and other meats, warm boiled potatoes, salad and for dessert, little almond and chocolate slices" *chez* Murdoch sometime in the 1980s, was keen to assure us that a part of her inner world was "absolutely Irish", don't you know.

Inevitably Iris's pals took pride of place in these obsequies. A.S. Byatt sensibly confined herself to a single encomium — "I feel that something in my life, which was the most important thing in my literary life has ended" — mentioned what a good friend Murdoch had been to her and kept it at that. A.N. Wilson was much in evidence. Yet the phone undoubtedly rang with greatest persistence at the Norfolk home of Professor Malcolm Bradbury. In the course of what must have been an exhausting Monday afternoon, Bradbury told the *Express* that "She was a philosopher. She did believe in art in the most intense way. There is a wonderful magic about everything she has ever written"; informed the *Guardian* that "something of the impish magic which was her character springs out of the pages of what she wrote"; and confided to the *Telegraph* that "she belongs amongst the four or five greatest novelists of the second half of this century to come out of Britain". By the time the *Times* managed to get through the blocked phone lines, exhaustion had clearly set in and Bradbury was only able to deliver himself of a stark "I have known her for a long time and she was brilliant". Happily, he rallied and could later be heard on Radio Four and the World Service books programme.

And now of course we all know her. Dear Iris. And yet one can't help feeling that the columns of print lavished on her death are not so much a celebration of a late lamented writer, or even a chance for professional obituarists to keep their hands in, as a classic demonstration of the way in which our modern media works.

"Tragic", "buxom" (another word that mysteriously surfaced in these imaginings) Iris. Already the clouds of myth have descended, and it will take years to establish — if in fact it ever can be established — what sort of personality wandered round the big, untidy house in Oxford and wrote all those, at any rate towards the end, equally big and untidy books.

Meanwhile Peter Conradi's biography has just been signed up by HarperCollins, there is talk of a film (Judi Dench in the starring role, natch). Unbelievable as it sounds, in death gentle, retiring Miss Murdoch, that quiet presence in the corner of the room at so many literary parties, that epitome of literary self-effacement, is suddenly a megastar. How she would have hated it.

Books & Bookmen

■ CONGRATULATIONS to publisher royal Michael O'Mara whose company recently announced a massive 183 percent hike in turnover to £8.2m for the year to 31 March 1998.

Obviously most of the extra sales came from the hastily-updated edition of Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story*, which arrived slap bang in the middle of the financial year in question. Er, not quite. O'Mara was reported in *Publishing News* as saying that while the Morton book accounted for much of the surge, other titles had made a contribution to what had been a good year all round.

Hurrah, then, for the revenues generated by natural bestsellers like *Killer Tea Cosies and How to Make Them*, *Ailments Through the Ages* and *The Book of the Orgasm*, all of which emerged from the O'Mara stable in the period covered by the accounts — not to forget doughty backlist titles such as *Dirty Jokes for Women*, *I Love My Pussy* and *The History of Farting*.

■ WHAT is happening with *All Dressed Up*, hippy-turned-slang lexicographer Jonathon Green's history of the 1960s counterculture?

Shortly after it was published by Jonathan Cape last August, it disappeared from the shelves pending settlement of a legal action.

In December Random House announced that the matter had been sorted out, the book had been pulped and that an amended paperback would appear under the Pimlico imprint this summer.

In fact the issue is far from resolved. The contentious passage, which owes more to urban myth than to diligent research, alleges that some of Caroline Coon's female staff at Release boosted the drug advice charity's funds with immoral earnings. In the process, Green implicated one major rock star as an enthusiastic customer, and suggested that another big name had taken advantage of the service but refused to pay up.

While December did see George Harrison (who denied being the prompt payer) win his case against Random House, Coon and Mick Jagger (who denied any involvement) are still very much involved in legal wrangles with the publisher. If the paperback edition is to remain on schedule, Random House must be hoping a swift resolution can be reached.

Jagger and Coon, however, are unlikely to compromise, protesting strongly that the amended Harrison-friendly text still libels them, so this one could run and run.

■ KEEPING up the marketing spin on prolific senior lady novelists is always a problem. But Little, Brown has found a neat solution for Bernice Rubens' new one (her 21st, it turns out) *I, Dreyfuss*?

Prospective purchasers will note that the words "WINNER OF THE BOOKER PRIZE" have been sandwiched between author and title on the front cover. There's no point in disappointed customers complaining either: Ms Rubens *did* win the Booker Prize — albeit when Ted Heath was prime minister, the present incumbent was still at school and milk was a shilling a pint.

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

ON the eve of the launch of former Tory MP Edwina Currie's latest literary masterpiece *The Ambassador*, distressing news reaches us of plummeting sales of her previous bonkbusters.

THEN: *A Parliamentary Affair*, rrp £6.99 paperback.

NOW: A *signed* copy spotted in a south London Conservative Association jumble sale, now retailing for the grand price of 50p. The book remained unsold...

'Bookworm'

footnotes

VACCINE AND NOT HEARD

THOUGH hearings at the Phillips public inquiry into BSE have broken up for a few weeks, its officials are drawing up what may turn out to be their most controversial document. It is a draft factual account of government policy on vaccines prepared for injection into masses of people, almost all of which contain some material derived from beef.

The first hint that anyone in officialdom was worried about the impact of BSE on these vaccines came at a meeting of senior officials at the department of health on 17 March 1988.

The feeling of the meeting was summed up by ministry of agriculture under secretary, Alistair Cruikshank, as follows: "there is probably no risk in drinking milk or eating flesh from animals affected by BSE, but that the position was much less clear in relation to brains, spleens and other organs. This raised questions about the safety of human vaccines prepared using bovine material."

THREE LETTERS: *Sir Richard Southwood*

The chief medical officer Sir Donald Acheson said he suspected there was no risk, but this could take "30 to 40 years to prove". In the meantime, he warned, "ministers would be very exposed, if, as seems inevitable, the press began to devote attention to the subject".

The press showed no interest. But others were worried. A memo from Dr Hilary Pickles at the department of health on 21 June 1988 revealed: "I understand the pharmaceutical industry are also concerned: they had been using bovine not sheep products in various processes because scrapie is endemic in British sheep... the highest risk would be from parenterals [for injection] prepared from brain [eg rabies vaccine]."

The BSE scare led to the appointment of an expert committee of inquiry under Oxford zoology professor Sir Richard Southwood. On 30 August 1988 Sir Richard wrote to Acheson: "The only outstanding practical matter that we need to address at the present time is the use of serum in pharmacological work. I heard... that Wellcome are now only using serum from New Zealand."

Wellcome's initiative in getting its vaccine beef products from herds in New Zealand, which had not been fed on animal products as in Britain, was not yet insisted on by the government. Three times in 1988, Sir Richard Southwood wrote to the relevant statutory body, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, which is made up of top medical experts, many of whom are linked to the drug companies, asking for more urgent action on vaccines.

On 16 December 1988 a meeting of the Southwood committee considered that the response from the safety of medicines committee "was somewhat complacent, particularly in relation to the problem of existing medicinal products". On 26 January 1989, the Committee on Safety of Medicines wrote to Southwood that guidelines for the industry had been agreed. In future, bovine serum should only be taken from "appropriately certified herds".

The committee's letter went on: "Many vaccines are stored for up to five years before being released and this will therefore have to be considered."

The Southwood committee report was published the following month, February 1989. "The greatest risk in theory," it warned, "would be from parenteral injection of material derived from bovine brain or lymphoid tissue. Medicinal products for injection which are prepared from bovine tissues... might also be capable of transmitting infectious agents."

Prompted by the report, the Committee on Safety of Medicines sent 4,000 letters to drug companies asking for information about bovine products. Not all the information from these letters was passed on to the authorities. Sir Donald Acheson, chief medical officer, told the recent Phillips inquiry: "We were told that a number of things that we wanted to discuss were confidential in the commercial sense... and that they could not discuss them with us... They put up with me, but every now and again they would say, 'Sorry, we cannot share that with you'."

Nor was the information always accurate. A memo from the committee in September 1988 revealed: "The computer list shows 33 product licences extant for preparations of bovine origin." The memo categorically asserted: "There are no licensed products derived from bovine brain." At the recent inquiry, Sir Donald Acheson was asked:

Q: Would you have been concerned if there were licensed products from bovine brain?

A: Surely.

Q: I want you to look at an extract from the MCA questionnaire summary... One of the items is under a company number — we have 01234, because it is not right that the company should be identified here. Company name, a large company. The product name is drug X. Animal specification is bovine and the animal ingredients include calf brain. Do you see that?

A: I do.

Q: If you had known about that at the time, would that have caused you concern?

A: It certainly would, unquestionably, which I did not.

After some delay the Committee on Safety of Medicines guidelines ensured that the drug companies got their bovine materials from "healthy herds" in Australia and New Zealand. But what happened to all those vaccines with bovine material from unhealthy British herds, which were stored up sometimes five years in advance? On 31 October 1990, the committee's BSE working group minutes recorded:

"VACCINE STOCKS. Dr David Taylor declared a non-specific non personal interest in (company name deleted) and took part in the discussion. Dr Richard Kimberlin declared a specific personal interest and did not participate in the discussion but remained at the meeting.

"The working group considered that the secretariat should explore with the company the possibility that the unabsorbed vaccines which had limited usage should be replaced with batches using bovine materials which complied with the guidelines, especially where the stock-out date extended beyond 1991. There may be some commercial loss to the licence holder but it is unlikely to be very large." A list of the relevant vaccines was attached.

What happened then? What happened to the stored vaccines which, if injected into people, might carry the danger of infection? No one seems to know. The former Tory ministers who gave evidence to the Phillips inquiry didn't know. Asked about vaccines, they responded as follows: William Waldegrave: "I do not remember that as an issue." John Macgregor: "I cannot remember, frankly..." Tony Newton: "I do not think I am in a position to help you." Edwina Currie: "I have not refreshed my memory... Had the experts said: 'We feel the vaccines being built up are not entirely free of risk, we are therefore going to recommend that they be destroyed and that replacement stocks are acquired, and that this may delay the onset of the (immunisation) campaign for two weeks', we would have said: 'fine'." Kenneth Clarke, who was secretary of state for health from 1988 to 1990: "What one clearly got from all this was that they were advising us that we should continue with vaccine components and so on and the risk was so remote that [it] would not justify stopping it. I still believe that advice to have been correct."

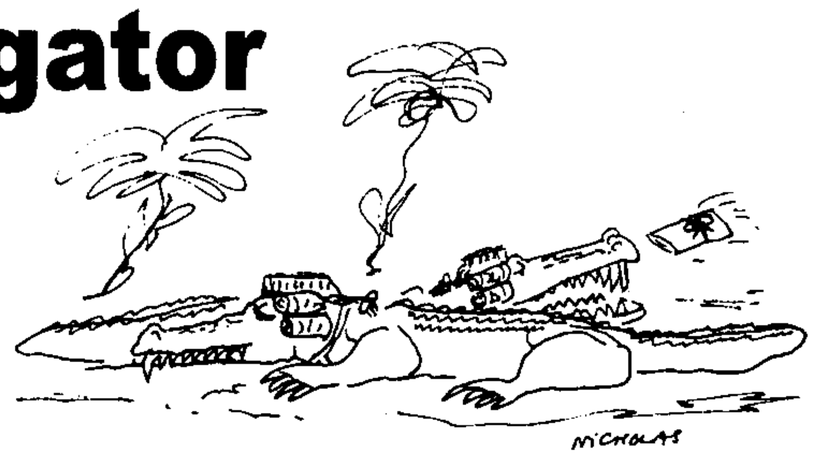
The *Eye* asked the BSE inquiry, which has heard 300 witnesses, what information has come to light which reveals what happened to the stocks of vaccines with bovine serum from British cows manufactured before the BSE scare broke. A spokeswoman replied: "We have no information which can answer any of those questions."

The *Eye* put the same questions to the department of health. "We outsourced the supplies of bovine material for vaccines away from Britain very early," said a spokeswoman. In reply to the question "when were the old stocks replaced?", the department sent a 16 page calendar of events, which reveals:

- *As late as July 1992*: "The Group's previous concern about vaccine stocks in relation to a specific company [unnamed] were resolved by the company concerned producing a new batch with New Zealand foetal calf serum of assured quality."
- *Not until November 1996*: "All currently licensed vaccines complied with the guidelines and did not contain any UK-sourced bovine material."

Neither item, nor any other in the 16 pages, answered the question.

See you later Litigator



THE long war against the pensions ombudsman waged by the pensions industry, the newly-privatised utilities and their wealthy lawyers has entered another bitter phase with the decision of the court of appeal in the case of the National Grid Company (widely known as National Greed) v Jeffries, Laws and Mayes.

The pension lawyers and the employers hate the ombudsman, Dr Julian Farrand, because he deals with complaints from the public free of charge without a lawyer in sight, and because he takes the old fashioned view that the purpose of occupational pension schemes is to provide pensions for pensioners.

Most big companies, especially those which have been privatised in the last 15 years, believe that the pension fund, especially when it goes into surplus, is a *little* pot of money for their own corporate use. When National Greed and Co were privatised, their directors decided that the huge surpluses on the pension funds should be split 70/30 — 70 for use by the company, and 30 for the pensioners. Into the bargain, the directors excused the company from paying any more contributions into the fund.

The mass sackings which followed were paid for out of the pensions surplus, and more than a billion pounds of pension money was swiped by the already booming companies. In 1996 two former National Greed workers, Bill Laws and Reg Mayes, went to the ombudsman, protesting that all the money should have gone to the pensioners. The ombudsman quickly concluded that they were right. The rules of the schemes plainly stipulate that a surplus cannot be appropriated for any other reason except paying normal pensions.

In February 1997 Dr Farrand announced that the companies must pay back the money to the pensioners. Like his similar determination over the Bus Employees Pension Fund, this was greeted with fury by the employers and by the swarm of rich lawyers who buzz around the pensions honey.

The companies appealed to the high court and found an ally in Mr Justice Robert Walker. Spurred on by four QCs for the companies, he allowed the appeal. Champagne flowed throughout the Inns of Court.

This month, after more months of interminable arguments and stupendous fees for the QCs, the court of appeal reversed the Walker judgment. "Unfortunately," said Dr Farrand, "there is a widespread belief that the employer always 'owns' the surplus so that trustees only too often ill-advisedly cooperate in its 'repatriation' without regard to the legitimate expectations of its members. The verdict can be seen as a vote of confidence in my approach."

The pensioners, hundreds of whom die every month, hope soon to see a modest rise in their pittance of a pension as the companies comply with the court's decision. No such luck. The court of appeal judgment has a sting in the tail. In an astonishing paragraph near the end, the judges say they can "see nothing" to prevent the companies, in league with their trustees, altering the rules of the pension scheme retrospectively to allow them to swipe the money back again.

The rumour in the court was that the judges were split. The senior judge, Lord Justice Nourse, swayed towards the employers, while Lords Justice Schiemann and Brooke could not see how to get round the rules. The court, which likes to pretend it is always united, found for the pensioners but left National Greed and Co a sly device to hang on to the pensioners' money.

Anyway, all three judges are keen to send the case on to the House of Lords. This will postpone a decision by at least a year in which thousands more pensioners will die and hundreds of thousands more pounds will pour into the pockets of the barristers.

GUERNSEY, JERSEY, ALDERNEY — AND SHARK?

THE authorities in the Channel Islands, worried sick by threats from the treasury to clean up their offshore financial institutions, are keen to show that they act swiftly to bring dubious banking practices to book.

Last July Cantrade, a subsidiary of UBS, the biggest bank in Europe, was fined £3m in Jersey for "criminal recklessness". Now it is Guernsey's turn. Another awkward legal case involving the Guernsey branch of the Bank of Bermuda is crawling wearily to court.

In August 1992 seven people, mostly retired accountants and bankers, clubbed together to deposit their life savings, about £1m, with the Bank of Bermuda in Guernsey. They agreed that their million could be "traded" (gambled) on movements in foreign exchange, but naturally expected to be kept informed of any deals in which their money was invested.

Three months later, in November 1992, they were rather upset to be told that the entire million had been lost and that they owed the bank a further £800,000, payment of which was expected in three weeks. They asked for details of the deals which had led to this disaster, but were told nothing. In 1993, the bank's chief dealer was sacked with a month's notice in mysterious circumstances.

Christopher Reynolds, a retired accountant, sued the bank, alleging deception. The legal proceedings were interminable. When Mr Reynolds fell ill with terminal cancer of the spine, the delays and postponements intensified. Finally, a Guernsey judge threatened the bank that unless the relevant documents were released and the defence submitted, he would give judgment for Mr Reynolds.

The case was settled out of court — just in time. In December 1996 Mr Reynolds was paid £150,000 by the bank to compensate for the £100,000 he had lost four years earlier. In February 1997, he died. Another plaintiff threatened to go to the press with the story — and will be paid in full plus interest: £89,000.

The case of the remaining five has been set down for a hearing in the London high court in June. The five are claiming £10m. Everyone involved expects an out of court settlement, which will ensure, sadly, that the really juicy material in the case will never see the light.

HAVING IT OFSTED
(Or Not, As The Case May Be)

CHRIS and...

...AMANDA

IS THE chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead telling the whole truth about his love affair with his former student Amanda Johnston? The *Eye* presents this timetable.

September 1974: Chris Woodhead started as head of the English department at Gordano comprehensive school, Bristol.

April 1975: Woodhead's wife Cathy gave birth to a daughter.

October 1975: Woodhead led a party of sixth form boys and girls on a week's creative writing course. The course was run by the Arvon Foundation, founded by Ted Hughes. It was held in a farmhouse at Totleigh Barton, Devon.

Woodhead installed himself in the "monks' room", a hidey-hole up a staircase leading away from the refectory. There were three dormitories, two for girls one for boys. Among the girls on the course was Amanda Johnston, 18. Fellow pupils couldn't help noticing that she, sometimes with other girls, would go to the monks' room for special creative writing/reading sessions with the head of English.

Not everyone was impressed with Woodhead's behaviour. As the *Eye* put it when first reporting this trip (901): "Chris Woodhead's flirtatious relationship with Amanda was a constant and disruptive source of gossip among the pupils for the entire week." The novelist, the late Angela Carter, who was a visiting tutor on the course, was specially appalled and said so.

Sniggers about the relationship continued when the party returned to the school. Those who talked openly about it were advised by Woodhead to keep quiet. His affectionate relationship with Amanda continued, and in September 1976, Woodhead left his wife.

In the autumn of 1976 he started teaching at a teachers' training college in Oxford. Amanda went to the University of East Anglia at Norwich. She lasted only a few weeks there before joining Woodhead in Oxford. The couple lived together for nine years.

In 1994 Chris Woodhead was appointed chief inspector of schools. In 1995 the *News of the World* published the story of his relationship with Amanda Johnston. The paper ran a statement from Chris Woodhead's lawyers, as follows:

"Chris Woodhead didn't have a sexual relationship or any improper relationship with Amanda Johnston when he was a teacher and she was a pupil. They did have a relationship a long time afterwards when they met in Oxford in December 1976. Chris was by then separated from his wife. Amanda had moved to Oxford not knowing Chris was there... He has not behaved in any manner which will call into question his integrity."

In June 1996 the *Eye* reported that some of Woodhead's former pupils remembered "a different picture" — "They seem to recall that Woodhead's extra-curricular interest in Amanda started in 1975 when she was his pupil and he was living with his wife." There was no reaction from Mr Woodhead or his lawyers to this article.

In June 1998 the government published proposals to make sexual relations between teachers and pupils a criminal offence. The *Eye* wondered what the chief inspector thought of these proposals and described his lawyers' statement to the *News of the World* as "a historical exercise of the sort which might fall short of the high standards of accuracy normally expected by Ofsted".

No one took this up — until this month when a student asked Woodhead for his views on teacher-pupil sex. His bizarre reply and his relationship with Amanda was plastered over the Sunday papers, all of which happily accepted his story.

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

OLD HABITS die hard. So it is no surprise that friends of pioneer spin doctor Peter Mandelson have been spinning away on the subject of whether or not he will face a huge tax bill on the sale of his Notting Hill bijou residence, now on the market at £780,000.

In his new caring, sharing, contrite mode designed to expedite his ministerial comeback, Mandy's friends would like the world to believe there will be no tax-free £250,000 profit on the sale. The reason, it is suggested, is that MPs with two homes (one in London and one in their constituency if different) are not like other taxpayers. Unluckily they, so the Mandelson spin goes, will have their constituency home designated by the taxman as their "main" residence which is free from capital gains tax on sale. Any other home, it is suggested, will face capital gains tax at 40 percent on the profit.

Up to a point Lord Rio. Like everyone else fortunate to own two homes, MPs can decide which is their tax free "main" residence for gains tax purposes. They then tell the Revenue which accepts their choice. But that choice is not written in stone. It can be altered if homes change. All that happens is that the tax free element will be reduced pro rata to reflect the period of any gain when the home sold was not the "main" residence.

Furthermore the Revenue allows MPs to claim travelling allowances to and from their constituency home even if this is not designated by them as their "main" residence. Perhaps this point confused Mandelson when referring to where MPs' "main" residence is to be found for tax purposes. For income tax on parliamentary allowances, part of taxed income, it can indeed be the constituency home. But not necessarily for capital gains tax.

Now let us look at the house that Geoffrey bought. Chez Mandy would appear to have cost £450,000 to £525,000 provided by the Britannia building society (£150,000) and the Robinson building society (£373,000). Mandelson repaid £40,000 of the Robinson loan from the sale of his Holborn flat.

At the time in late 1996/early 1997, Mandelson already owned a home in his Hartlepool constituency which is reckoned to be worth around £70,000. But the Robinson repayment suggests he had already designated his London home as his "main" residence and so faced no tax bill on his profit which went to pay off generous Geoffrey.

It seems rather unlikely given the profit potential from any Notting Hill home versus one in sunny Hartlepool that Mandelson would have done other than designate his dream home as his "main" residence. Especially as a minister is certain to spend far more time in London than in his constituency.

After repaying the Britannia and Robinson, also due to receive some two years' rolled up interest (another £30,000-40,000), Mandelson could be left with a £250,000 profit. That would attract gains tax at 40 percent — £100,000 — if Notting Hill was not his "main" residence. Such a hefty bite would somewhat reduce the style of modest home even this latest follower of Mother Teresa could afford.

There are other tax wrinkles which may ensure Mandy does not need to boost his contribution to the treasury. MPs have two years in which to tell the Revenue which is their "main" residence. So if he had not already done so he could possibly do so now as he moved during 1997 although agreeing the purchase late the previous year.

Furthermore, the Revenue takes the last three years as having been at the designated "main" residence when apportioning the gain over the number of years at the home that is sold. As Mandelson has not been living in Notting Hill for three years he would seem to be home tax free.

A YEAR on and there is still no clear idea of whether or not juries will go for seriously complex fraud trials. The home office is understood to have received its requested submissions on the suggested alternatives of special juries, sole judges or tribunals. Now it's for home secretary Jack Straw to decide.

The lord chief justice Lord Bingham, the Serious Farce Office and the crown prosecution service (CPS) are said to be in favour of change. The criminal Bar (a major beneficiary of the legal aid bonanza that reform is designed to curb) not surprisingly is against. So too it seems is the lord chancellor's office despite Lord Irvine's campaign against legal fat cats other than himself.

There are no votes in the issue so there may be no rush to judgement by Straw. The least objectionable option might be to allow certain major trials to be designated for possible judge alone hearing with the defence having the right to challenge that ruling. Given that most criminal trial judges come from a jury culture that would probably ensure that while the principle existed it was almost always ignored on the basis of that old standby "special circumstances" which dictated a jury. Few if any defendants are likely to vote for a judge instead of a jury, with the 12 chances it represents, once all the legal challenges have failed.

Given the home secretary's move to greatly restrict the right of trial by jury for minor offences on grounds of cost, it would appear inconsistent to not follow the same line for fraud trials. Especially as the treasury is pressing for cost savings.

SO THAT great patriot Mohamed Fayed has answered the call of his adopted country and made Kevin Keegan available for duty as the English soccer manager despite the needs of the Fulham Pharaohs. But will this gesture be enough to ensure the Egyptian phoney the coveted British passport that adorns his website?

Surely not when measured against his recent *Punch* outbursts against the home secretary's cabinet colleagues Jack Cunningham and Frank Dobson as "arrogant shits" and "sons of a bitch" and the whole Labour government as "organised crime".

THE imperial ambitions of Ladbroke chief executive Peter George have taken another giant leap forward with the £1.1bn takeover of rivals Stakis. George has been regularly assisted in his reshaping of Ladbroke by advice from the leading management consultants Bain & Co. Indeed the group is said to have spent up to £3m on Bain advice in recent years. Money well spent as Lady Patten, a

"Your report says you lack ambition"

non-executive director of the hotel and gambling group, would no doubt agree. The wife of the former Tory minister sits on the advisory board of Bain.

SHAREHOLDERS and creditors of cheap CD producers Tring International may be nursing their losses, but for maestro Paul Levinson the beat goes on. It is rumoured that the Tring assets have been sold — for a song? — to a Mallorca-based German record producer, Wilhelm Mittrich, who may be not unknown to Levinson.

Like his fellow tax exile, Mittrich is said to be a man with a past that does not always excite enthusiasm. The duo are now said to be eyeing Carlton Home Entertainment, aided no doubt by the past role as a Carlton group director of Leslie Hill, now sharing the boardroom of Mittrich's CD company Point Group.

METAL TRADER Charlie "Copperfingers" Vincent of Winchester Commodities' fame appears to have finally extricated himself from the legal minefield surrounding his involvement in the Ponzi circular money scam run by bankrupt former stockbroker Nicholas Rowley and his fund manager partner Alexander Jones. With family and friends Vincent invested up to £15m in the scheme lured by promises of 40 percent returns. When the bubble burst in 1996 the Vincent camp claimed to be owed £35m including phoney profits.

Rowley was made bankrupt after handing over assets worth around £7.5m. Jones, brother in law of Lord Astor, had been holding out on making a contribution despite an earlier agreement to do so. He has now agreed to make a contribution of around £1.5m — what was left from his several London properties after mortgages and a £1.5m debt to his wife were deducted. This money will take care of the claims from those Rowley victims who had not previously assigned their debts to Vincent.

Vincent is also due to return more than £3m paid to offshore trusts from the Rowley assets. He is also expected to pay around 80 percent of the legal fees which are put at between £1m and £2m. The net result is expected to be that the Rowley creditors, including Vincent and friends, will mostly get back just 17p in the £. Expensive: but this way Vincent avoids the threat of possible legal action and bankruptcy from the minority of Rowley creditors.

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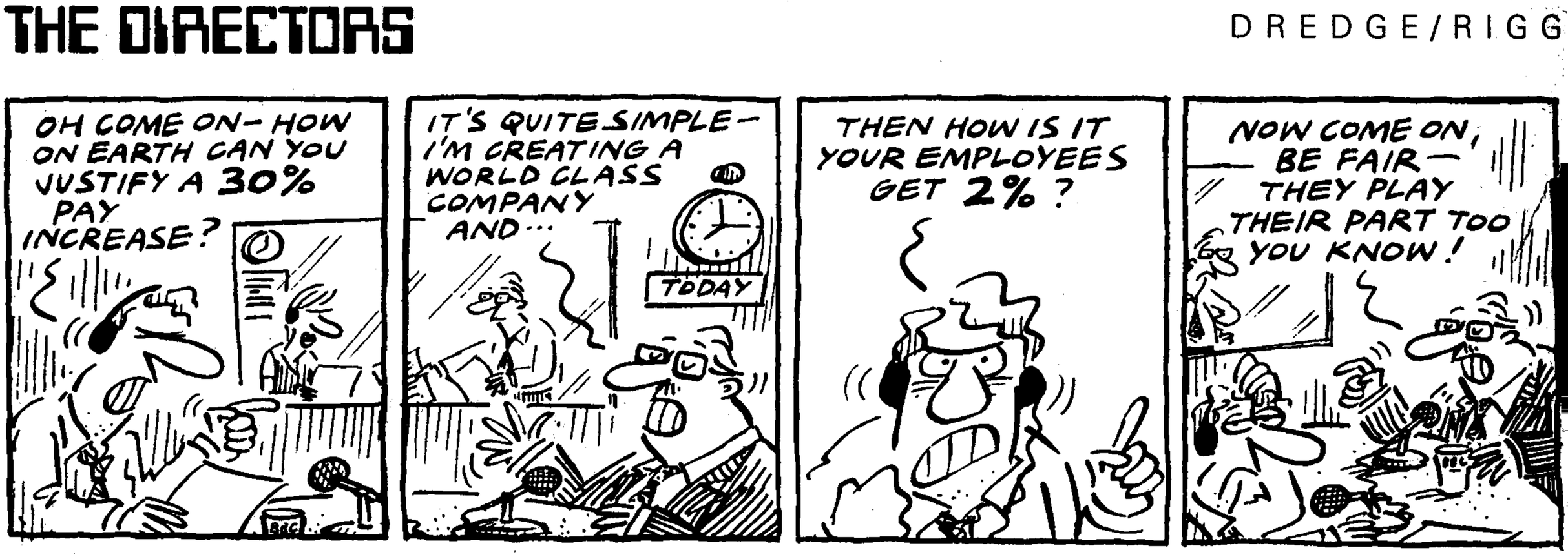
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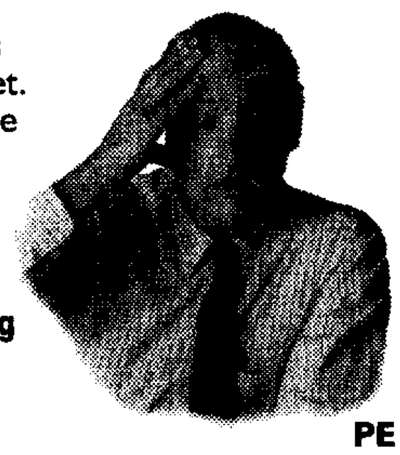

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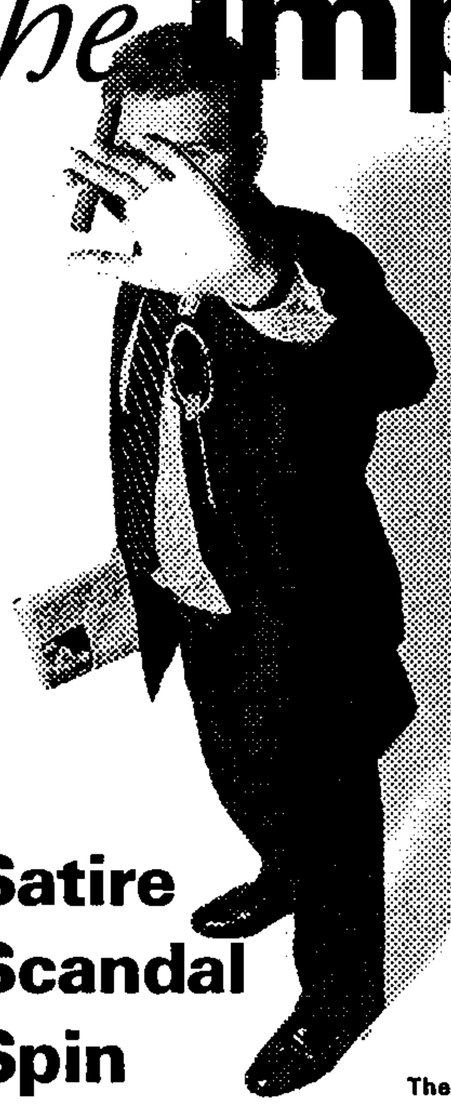

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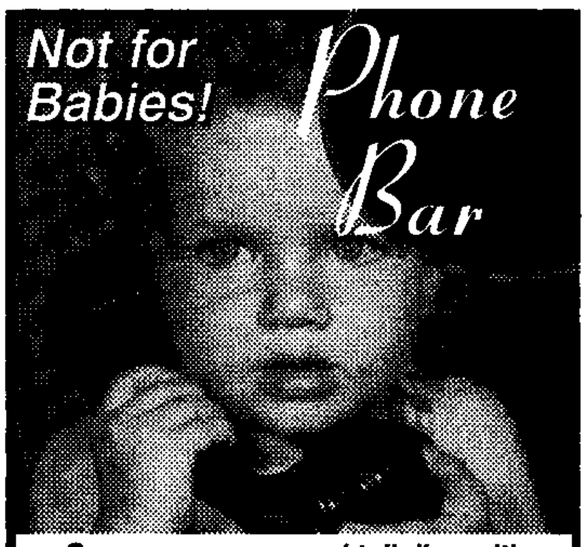

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for treatment of impotence etc., call
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on 0800 163861
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AMBITIOUS? Looking for a homebased business? Call and just listen 0171 806 7688 – (24 hrs).

NEVER AGAIN be without money – earn fortune from adult dating and phone-lines. Free info: 07000 780794, Ext 222.

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STUDENT, 31, MALE seeks lucrative work to fund MA. Anything con-sidered. Box 0470.

GRADUATE SEEKS foot in door of marketing. Offers commitment and intellect. 01483 577887.

WELL TRAVELLED, intelligent, perceptive ex-alcoholic seeks interesting employment. Box 0570.

EYE FINANCE

SERIOUS DEBT PROBLEMS? Private or business – homeowner or tenant? We can usually help (without more borrowing). DW & Co (established 1969). 01232 226813.

COUPLE WITH QUALITY idea / plans seek investor. Call (01273) 747268.

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New British Musical
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INVESTOR/S SOUGHT.
£75000 NEEDED
by penniless inventor to exploit patent protected invention.
(Small kitchen article with potential worldwide market.)
Details from Box 0170

EYE NEED

MULTI MILLIONAIRE to back project. Bank guaranteed return. Telephone 0161 972 0680.

JAZZ DIVA! Rave reviews! Need resources to record CD. Progress report assured! 0114 249 0436.

BREAKDOWN TWO MONTHS and £4000 away. Genuine need. Genuine thanks. TSB 873901, 73437560.

FREETHINKING POSTGRAD unable to escape spiralling debts. Any help appreciated to avoid suffocation. Barclays 20-55-13, 60736910.

I REALLY NEED HELP to stop greedy bank manager repossessing my parent's business. I've done all I can. Can you help? Any amount would be great. Very genuine. Midland 40-44-34. Account 41298860.

CASH FOR EDUCATION – you rich? Make a difference. £10 would show you care. Midland 40-28-06, 62287226.

MONEY FOR OLD ROPE Company. Cheques payable to 'The Old Rope Company'. Box 0870.

POVERTY TRAP VICTIM seeks helping hand. Nationwide 07-00-30, 61452749. Queries Tel: 07899 883431.

ROBINSON CRUSOE stranded after wife sailed off with treasure. Any flotsam and jetsam gratefully received. Thanks. GIRO 89-20-04, A/C 75536282.

EYE NEED venture capitalist and sponsors for marine business – to enable us to stay afloat and compete in this new Europe. Barclays sort code 20-44-90, ACC 7049227. THANKY-OU. Box 0970.

25 YEAR OLD CUCKOLD needs £30,000 to buy out wife and save his home. NatWest 60-14-55, 37425765.

FEMALE ARTIST, 61, will become bag lady if home repossessed. £3,500 interest free loan sought. Repayment 2001 or will paint four portraits. Box 1070.

PLEASE HELP. LSE p'grad drowning in debt. Grateful for any sum, however small. Lloyds 30-94-79, 0394357. Thank you.

RETIRED GENTLEMAN seeks £8000 for world travel, thanks. Lloyds 30-93-56, 1514585.

SINGLE PARENT FATHER desperate – working but sinking fast. Please help. Thank you. Lloyds 30-99-86, 1415387.

MALE WITH C.P. desperate for £3000 to pay off unexpected debt. Many thanks. Box 1170.

DEBT RIDDEN NURSE (RMN) seeks help. Any sum appreciated. Barclays 20-74-45, 80331600.

MARRIED COUPLE both working hard (nurses), two kids, being pulled under by old debt. Any help sought. Lloyds 30-93-54, 0175226.

MATURE FURNITURE MAKING student needs sponsorship or commissions to complete final year (W.London). Abbey National 090126, 20260195. Pager 01523 480493.

AGORAPHOBIC Shirley Valentine trapped talking to walls requires huge amounts of money to ensure life style change. Will settle for £120 to change the wallpaper! Alliance and Leicester 726001, 680990763. All donors replied to. Box 1270.

ARMY CADET needs £2000 for expedition to South Africa to help people and animals. Halifax 11-15-20, 00010548.

SUICIDAL CAMBRIDGE undergraduate in debt, please help. Natwest 52 10 45. Account Number 23888776.

WORKING MOTHER needs £300.00 for Settlement Visa for young daughter. Any help gratefully received. Barclays 20-10-53, 80465925. Thanks.

DAUGHTER IN AUSTRALIA – struggling mum 50th birthday 1.1.2000 – seeks £3000 for once in lifetime trip. Natwest 60-05-41, 04421124.

WIDOW LONGS to visit only grand child in Australia. Can someone please help? Box 0670.

PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDENT – M, seeks cash, F-relationship optional. Anything considered. 07775 993009. A/C Lloyds 30-98-13, 0181766.

COMPOSER SEEKS FUNDS
(£30,000)
to complete and perform
"The Five Seasons",
his second symphony;
a single movement
seventy minutes work.
Patrons acknowledged on score.
40-07-15, 61179691.

BUDDING WRITER, two jobs but still sinking. Please help. Halifax 11 06 10, account number 00006242.

GAY GIRL, desperate. Any amount helps. Please. Natwest 51-70-14, 39006123.

EX-NURSE with multiple sclerosis can drive but cannot afford car. Heartfelt thanks. Sort code 30 91 60, Account Number 0338642.

THE TIPI VILLAGE in Wales urgently needs £35,000. Please help! (Natwest 53-70-31; a/c 19572948). Information from Rick Mayes Box 0969.

INTEREST FREE LOAN required for struggling born survivor. Details: write Box 1370.

BASTARD BOSSES. Desperate to leave to preserve health. £28K needed. Any help appreciated. GIRO 19-605-1304.

HELP! SINGLE MUM depressed, left owing £11,000, and help appreciated to rebuild life. Nationwide 07-01-16, 08864156.

GENUINE SINGLE MOTHER in despair, facing repossession 10.3. Desperate to regain dignity. Financial assistance £15,000 clear debts, start small business. Please help me have a future. Any help appreciated. More details. Box 1470.

WRITER DESPERATELY needs £5,000 to complete manuscript. Bank of Ireland 90 07 89, 18450878. Thank you.

STUDENT SPENT LOAN making prototype – needs £2000 to make commercially viable. Big commercial benefits if successful. 0113 246 7490. Barclays 20-48-42, 80073679.

EYE BET

INSIDER INFORMATION available from very successful gambling stable – 0976 730979.

CASINO BLACKJACK – with PROJECT21. Infopack 01344 780259.

EYE ESCAPE

ARMENIA – for a unique experience in this little known country, join one of our tours and be prepared to be amazed. ARMENIA HOLIDAYS. Tel: 01572 821330 ATOL 1585.

SOUTH AFRICAN GAME lodge and river bungalow holidays – gablani@aol.com 01531 822624.

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small seaside cottage
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MURDER WEEKENDS and other ideas. WWW.Mayhem.org.uk. Telephone 0181 959 6579 for brochure.

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FLIGHT OPTIONS – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

WORLDWIDE LOWEST prices allegedly! Tel: 01942 603599 / 680268. Fax: 01942 670868. Agents ATOL holders.

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Box Number ....
Private Eye Smalls
3 St Peter's Street
London N1 8JD

EYE CONTACT

ASIAN PARTNERS. Suman Marriage Bureau, 0181 571 5145 – WWW.CUPID.demon.co.uk

YOUNG LADIES worldwide seeks penpals, friends, lifemates. Free details, photos! HERMES, Box 610188/S, 10922 Berlin, Germany. Fax: 0049 30 25299775.

LUNCH IS OK is just an hour lunch is – OnlyLunch – introductions for busy professionals 0800 908 900.

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CONTACT MAG for adults: over 900 photos. APPROVAL copy from: MATCHMAKER, (S.76), Chorley, PR7 4BS. Or ring: 01257 480155 (24 hours).

BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN LADIES – personal introductions – exclusive contacts. OLGA EDWARDS, PO Box 56, Hyde, Cheshire. 0161 355 6841 (24 hrs).

MAKE FRIENDS IN AMERICA! Pen pal club with thousands of members wants you! Free details: TRANS-ATLANTIC PEN FRIENDS, Box 2188-PE, San Pedro, California 90731, U.S.A.

AMAZINGLY ALLURING irresistible Thai ladies w.l.t.m. sincere unattached British Gentleman. Free colour brochure. Thai Princess Introductions. Tel 01562 748600 (24hrs) – info@thai-princess-in.demon.co.uk

DISCREET PENPALS – articulate, naughty, home town ladies seeks interesting gentlemen. 2x26p stamps: EPPS, PO Box 36, Dartford, DA2 7ZU.

COVENT GARDEN Singles Drinks Parties. Every Thursday £15. Every Saturday £20. Ages 30-50. Free Brochure. 0171 836 3070.

ADULT CHATLINE', girls 18+, women on-line, message exchange, calls cost 60p per min, JCG, BN22 3pw, 0640 611688.

www.adcdating.co.uk – Free ads.

ADDITIONS – Attached? Yet need a loving friend? Nationwide newsletter – 0181 905 3304, 0181 958 9657. Total discretion assured (no computers used). Featured on ITV, American TV, BBC, Radios 4/5. Established 1992.

PLUMP PARTNERS – National Dating Agency. If you are plump or prefer a plump partner – ring 01352 715909.

'SINGLE GIRLS 18+' fun women want to chat to men, message exchange, CRS/11 TN21 0XB, Calls cost 60p per min, 08901 292374.

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mail box.
0121 328 2878
(Birmingham).

THAI CONNECTIONS – free brochure, video £15. 43 Trowbridge Gardens, Luton, LU2 7JY. 01582 481725.

'CONTACT CHATLINE' woman, girls 18+ willing to chat to men, message exchange. SUP/98 BN3 3RU, calls cost 60p per min, 0640 644026.

HEDONISM PARTIES, clubnights, holidays. Decadent, uninhibited, exhibitionist, fun-loving party animals. Singles, couples. S.a.e. PO Box 153, Greenford, UB6 8LY. 0181 575 2052.

PERSON TO PERSON – best singles magazine for friends / partners, U.K. or overseas. FREE DETAILS (Dept PE/8) P.O. Box 4, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9DN.

ADULT PARTIES and events. Nationwide and local contacts – 01582 750947, PO Box 2097, Luton, LU3 2ZT. www.club-aphrodite.com

EYE LOVE

GORGEOUS CHELSEA female, 30, seeks well spoken university educated man for serious commitment. Box 2270.

MALE, 27, dry SOH, occasionally musical, caring, shy, solvent. All letters answered. Birmingham. Box 2370.

BIG GIRL, 40, very special, seeks occasional respite from time consuming career. Jollies essential. Clever types adored. ALA. South. Box 4070.

BOB HOSKINS-TYPE geezer, 36, home counties, wltm Haydn Gwynne lookalike for Suffolk weekends, acid jazz, bookshops, Radio Four. Photo if poss. Box 1570.

RICH IN SPIRIT. Pretty, rubenesque, provincial undergraduette, tall, 37, seeks 5'11"+, ns/cs, gentleman for discreet dalliance. SW. Photo please. Box 1670.

HANDSOME YOUNG PILOT, public school, seeks very beautiful woman as mentor and friend for uncomplicated relationship – photo ensures reply. Box 1770.

EX-ALCI, WITTY, reliable, intelligent, refined, 41, excellent cook, n/s, has achieved everything sober except finding right woman, seeks slim, lovely, 30-45 lady, Inverclyde / Strathclyde / Glasgow. Box 1870.

MERE MORTAL SEEKS benevolent goddess for occasional celestial encounter. Bath. Box 2070.

SIX-FOOT ATHLETIC and attractive female writer, very fit 42, seeks intelligent, warm male who would never normally reply to one of these. I want a brilliant man to love. Doctor? Broker? Circus clown? Somebody nice. Dare I ask for a photo and winning letter? Box 4270.

EXTRA TERRESTRIAL sentenced to life in Earth AD 1956, seeks equal in female soulmate to survive madness earthlings call civilised life. W. London – have bike will travel. Box 3270.

ATTRACTIVE FEMININE married woman (mid 30's) Oxford based, would like to meet an attractive, interesting n.s male for uncomplicated occasional fun. Nice honest letter and photo please. Box 1970.

WHITE, ATTRACTIVE, SLIM single male, 37 – very loving, affectionate – hunts genuine lioness, 28-42 for roaring time. 01707 647520.

TOP NOTCH LADY needs Top Notch Gent in Battersea. Box 2170.

MALE – SEXY, attractive, 36 years of age professional, in London twice a week, wishes to meet sexy attractive lady up to 50, for discreet liaisons, champagne and pampering. Box 2269.

DOES MY FEMALE counterpart exist? Businessman mid forties, attached, happy, sporty, sophisticated, sensual – would like to meet a similar woman for a single (important) discreet, regular, happy, erotic, and sensual relationship. Enjoy wining/dining. Box 2769.

AMIABLE MALE, fifties, traces of wit and culture, occasionally assertive, WLTM intelligent, pleasant female for discreet, affectionate relationship. London/Essex. Box 2470.

INTELLIGENT AND WITTY, London based 23 year old female – seeks sensitive, but not wimpy 25-32 year old male,. Photo please. Box 2570.

ATTRACTIVE, professional male, young 45, hardworking, energetic, fit, loves, travel, good food and wine and wandering around museums + galleries; alas married but unfulfilled, seeks lady as friend, confidante and lover. London + SE. Box 2670.

GENTLEMAN, RELIABLE and successful, WLTM graduate girl over 20 requiring advice and TLC. Box 2770.

RARE BIRD with broken wing, now fit to soar once more, seeks strong, sensitive, single, silly man, 40-50ish who is sincere, bright and different. – Is it you? Tel No appreciated. Box 2870.

FATHER FIGURE, Croydon, supportive, kind, firm, seeks slim, quietish, ordinary girl, over 18, needing caring control. Tel 0181 689 8254.

HAPPY ATTACHED,
UNTYPICAL LAWYER*
6'1", 39,
seeks unavailable female, 40s, 50s
for the sheer (mutual) fun of it.
London.
P.S. I'm male. **Box 3670.**

LONDON LADY. Petite, curvy, happy – seeks cultured man, 48-58 to share theatre, opera, ballet, cinema, wining, dining out and cosy evenings in. Box 2970.

LIBERTINE, EXPAT, 50, worn stiffless by harrowing platonic marriage, seeks slim-waisted large-bosomed confidante for help with getting aloft and sharing lubricious fun. Box 3070

ADORABLE BOSOMY blonde arts grad wants creative, solvent, n/s male, 40+. Box 4470.

MARRIED MAN, with no intention of disrupting marriage or hurting anyone, seeks similar woman with similar feelings for very discreet, nice, warm but uncomplicated relationship. Afternoons, evenings, occasional nights in London apartment plus dining out, etc. I am turned 60 but active in mind and body – slim, clean-shaven, grey-haired, into wine, arts. You could be thirties to fifties, intelligent, probably very nervous about doing this, but... Let's meet and see. Box 3170.

TALL, SLIM, N/S prof male, 50, attached, GSOH. Seeks fun, frolics with discreet but bored lady. London/ South West / Home Counties. Satisfaction guaranteed! Daytimes only. Go on spoil yourself! Box 3370.

DAYGLO PIRATE opened Pandora's Box – seeks Lady Macbeth, 30-40, to marvel in its wonder. W. Mids. Box 3570.

SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE seeking intelligent, interesting woman (30-50) for social activities. Eventually best-friend, soul-mate, lover. Greater Manchester. Box 3770.

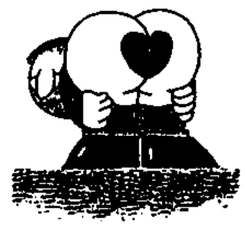
DIVORCED, PROFESSIONAL male, 45, small stature but big heart, seeks passionate lady, 50-60, who still likes to wear stockings, for uncomplicated relationship. South London / Surrey. Box 3870.

VIVACIOUS ENTREPRENEUSE, W. Yorks, seeks tall, caring male with brains as well as balls. 45-55, N/S, unattached? Reply guaranteed! Fax 01484 544300, Box 3970.

TWO FUN-LOVING, blonde, Oxford-educated, career girls WLTM "boys" (25-35) for dates, drinking and dancing (mostly drinking). Brains (a bonus), brawn (essential). Photo guarantees reply. London. Box 4170.

TALL, ASSERTIVE, successful man, 40, Bristol/London, seeks a naughty younger woman to enjoy the longer evenings with. I enjoy life to the full; film, theatre, travel, eating out and eating in, laughter and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with some spice then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 4370.

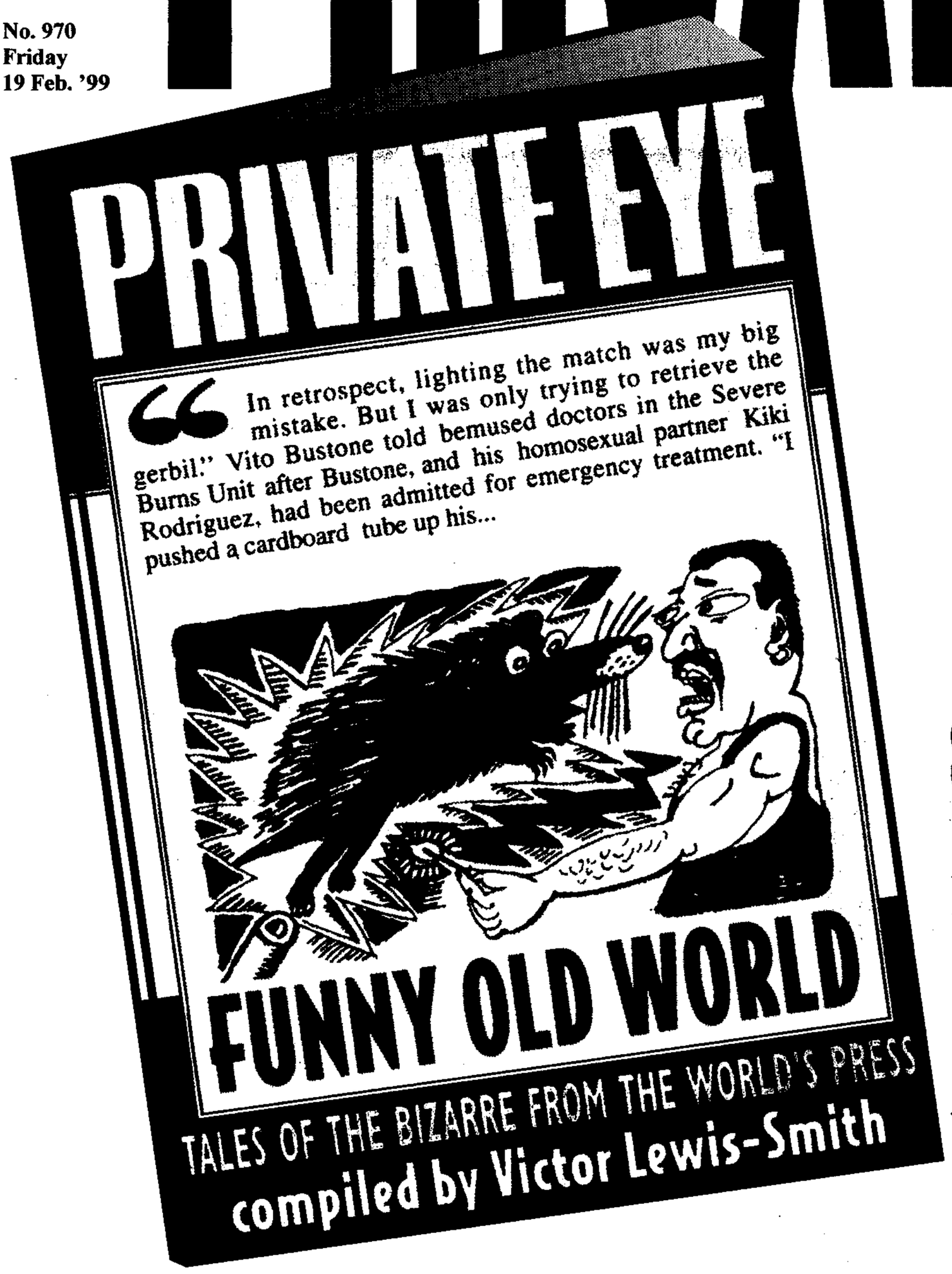
BLONDE – ATTRACTIVE, sporty, silly (34) – seeks tall, amusing, single man. Box 4570.



VALENTINE MESSAGES! (SEE PAGE 31)

PRIVATE EYE

No. 970
Friday
19 Feb. '99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